



THE WIRE

THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

Mike Patton

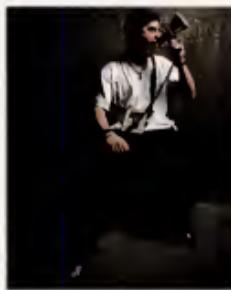
Fantômas hysteria

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Ira Cohen Antony &

Jones Elliott Sharp Grime Richard Barrett Venetian Snares MIA

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The Masthead

"Well, what did you expect in an opera - a happy ending?" snaps the Bugs Bunny sample closing *Suspended Animation*, the hyperactive new album from Fantômes, the avant Metal group led by this month's cover star Mike Patton (see Phil Freeman's story on page 34). Bugs' bite was swiped from cartoon classic *What's Opera, Doc?* Sadly, the Fantômes album shuns down before Patton gets to answer that "toon title's question. Elsewhere, but not so far away, Patton's frequent collaborator John Zorn has just released a new studio album, called *Rituals*, that just might be tackling the opera issue full on. Described by his label Tzadik as a "strange and mystical monodrama" in five movements "for mezzo soprano and ten instruments", this extraordinary, densely compacted piece, which packs plenty of action into its 26 minutes, was composed for the Bayreuth Opera Festival in 1998, where, reports the label's Website, the premiers caused "a bit of a scandal, with the audience split down the middle - half outraged detractors stomping out, whistling and jeering, and half cheering supporters".

Sadly, further documentation of Zorn's skirmish with the world's most pigheaded music establishment is hard to come by. But the very fact he premiered *Rituals* in Bayreuth, seat of the dynasty that preserves and

promotes the musical legacy of Richard Wagner while aggressively laundering his reputation as the vicious anti-semitic whose operas soundtraced Hitler's Third Reich, is in itself quite some spur to the imagination.

Expanding his tight ensemble of brass, woodwinds, percussion and strings with wind machines and buillerons, and including stage directions alluding to owls and gravedigging, *Rituals* could be Zorn's way of dismantling Wagner's idea of the *Gesamtkunstwerk* - total artwork - and reconstructing it in a more mobile miniture form, stripped of the absurd baggage that sinks so many Wagner productions. Regardless, Zorn's use of the extra-musical noise generators to accompany the wordless mezzo soprano Heather Gardner succeeds musically - for its witty contrast of cheesy, grating sound effects with an emotionally fulsome voice. The structure of Zorn's composition, meanwhile, is every bit as resourceful and witty as his "toon composer" hero Carl Stalling's telescoped symphonies. It might not have a happy ending, but surviving an encounter with the brutes of Bayreuth must be judged as a handsome victory for Zorn.

The Wagner monster is not easily destroyed, however, and his music's still seductive power is at once interrogated and exploited on a fascinating CD

called *Wagnerkomplex* on *Masse Und Macht*, which was mixed from eight different performances staged by Christian Von Bornes and The Brandenburg State Orchestra at Berlin's Palast Der Republik in 2003. Subtitled "musique et l'identité nationale allemande", it is divided into ten movements named after significant moments in German history, from Waterloo 1815 through to the present. This particular struggle over German national identity was itself fought on the contested site of the old East German Republic's palace, which is threatened with the demolition intended to erase traces of the GDR and thereby leave the "new Germany" free to get its power politics accepted without hindrance, say the stevenites.

Calling it a "psychogeography", Von Bornes mixed the *Wagnerkomplex* CD from loosed and layered recordings of the orchestra taped from different points around the Palast. A patina of vinyl surface crackle seals the mix. The end effect is to bounce the listener between the different points in time represented by the various layers of Wagner, plus a Mahlerian march, and the political-cultural uses that continue to be made of the music. Definitely no happy endings here but it provides one hell of a hair-raising ride with the devil.

CHRIS BOHN

WIRE

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2nd Floor East
88-94 Wentworth Street
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Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5010
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011
info@thewire.co.uk
www.thewire.co.uk

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www.thewire.co.uk
THE WIRE
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88-94 Wentworth Street
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Tel +44 (0)20 7422 5022
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info@thewire.co.uk
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Editor-in-Chief & Publisher Tony Hennigan
tony@thewire.co.uk

Editor Chris Bohm chris@thewire.co.uk
Deputy Editor Anne Hide Neast anne@thewire.co.uk
Reviews Editor David Stubbs dsd@thewire.co.uk
Editor-at-Large Rob Young rob@thewire.co.uk

Art Direction & Design Kelli Eithon, Jon Forse
info@non-formal.com

Advertising Sales (7422 5014)

Andy Tait andy@thewire.co.uk
Shane Woodward shane@thewire.co.uk
Advertising Production
Slim Smith design@thewire.co.uk

Subscriptions & Administration (7422 5023)
Ben House, **Phil England** subscr@thewire.co.uk

Web Editor Susanna Glasser susanna@thewire.co.uk

Distributors

News stands

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(EXCLUDING USA):
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Tennant, Worcester, Venables Road
Nottingham, NG1 1RR, UK
www.tennant.co.uk
Tel +44 (0)115 920 8800/9110
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tencom@tennant.co.uk

USA:
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Tel 800 222 1234
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USA: For US subscriptions contact The Wire

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GERMANY
Pfeiffer & Co
214 Machtstr.
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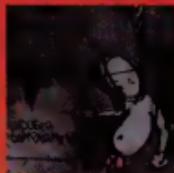
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**ENDLESS PATHS**

Acid Mothers Temple SWR
Endless Paths (SWR) 1995, 60 mins. 16mm film with surround sound. A collection of material ranging from acid rock and jazz and hip-hop to surreal landscapes. *Composing Paths* will be one of 2005's most challenging films. It's a must see for acid rock fans. 10th April.

VERY FRIENDLY CLASSICS 1995

**REIGNS**

Hey Colossus A Microphone Into The Ground
"Call this music filth-music, whatever you like – the music is the sound of the earth, the sound of the villages of no level of power and that the human mind from many layers." DS

POWERHOUSE 1995

**ACID MOTHERS TEMPLE SWR**

Acid Mothers Temple SWR
Ignatius (SWR) 1995. The group was formed in 1968 (Tokyo, Japan) as Acid Mothers Temple and disbanded in 1972. Acid Mothers Temple, Gong. Available on 20th April.

VERY FRIENDLY CLASSICS 1995

**HEY COLOSSUS**

II
"Playing up the Native-Folkish imperial 'Red Glare', the band has the 12 minute 'Voyage of 'Sea II' with its general 12 polar well of visual clear effects on it 4 shirts, these will collapse prior word jonesianistically." G

**IGNATIUS**

Acid Mothers Temple SWR
Ignatius (SWR) 1995. The group was formed in 1968 (Tokyo, Japan) as Acid Mothers Temple and disbanded in 1972. Acid Mothers Temple, Gong. Available on 20th April.

VERY FRIENDLY CLASSICS 1995

**DEEP IN THE LINE**

The Means Pervert
Deep In The Line (The Means Pervert) 1995. 60 mins. 16mm film with surround sound. The Means Pervert (John Baker, John Holmes, John Polley) have created a new film for the 21st century. Deep In The Line is a 60 minute, 16mm film with surround sound. It's a film about the search for meaning and life. Look for DTL (Deep In The Line) on 20th April.

VERY FRIENDLY CLASSICS 1995

**SOLEX + H.A.S.**

In The Hobo's
Solex In The Hobo's (Solex + H.A.S.) 1995. Solex In The Hobo's is spelling modulus, retrogression and the search for the original P.A.S. culture developing in a living, experienced dedicated staff.

POWERHOUSE 1995 THE FIGHTING PUP A PRO

**KARATE**

In The Fighting

Karate are in living shape with this excellent, energetic, well-constructed film for the fans of their never-sleeps and never-fails in kick in the nuts of their early days.

POWERHOUSE 1995 MLP & POF

**HORSES**

Horses With Horses & Bach Other
Single 4 track-dripping softness after a few years of silence. The band are back with a bang. The first new work since 'Complications' (1993) (Sonic Peril) and 'Bruce' (1993) (Sonic Peril). (Horses Peril) and Bruce Cordiner (Geddes/You/ Bach Peril).

STRANGE ATTRACTORS CD

**SUBARACHNOID SPACE**

The Red Wall
Subarachnoid Space, dully credulous, the brain bounces around in a dark, dark, dark, dark, swimming with pores and flams as far as humanly possible with down and reverb in increasing volume.

STRANGE ATTRACTORS CD

**CURIOS CD**

Scorpions In The Garden Of The Dead Rivers
Curious Co. (Hanns-Joachim John Polley) started the band in 1988. The band's name is a reference to an ancient pre-mosaic of Elbow. Hanns-Joachim John Polley is a regular collaborator with Devendra Banhart. On tour in the UK. Available on 20th April.

TRACK & FIELD CD

**WOLF EYES**

Fuck The Old Man!

Wolf Eyes have the old (Hanns-Joachim John Polley) 1995. It's a 100 minute, 16mm film with surround sound. The original is sold out. The film is sold out. It's your own risk.

POWERHOUSE 1995

**DANIEL MENCHE**

Single
Brand new show with crossed out titles.
Hanns-Joachim John Polley, Daniel Menche, The Menches, John Doe, Sonnen, Alain Rabatelli, Bruce Of Sonic Peril, Harrow, Brian & Isabelle and AMP

POWERHOUSE CD

**AMP**

Lower releases by the UK's favorite media subversives. *Paradise* (1995) is a 16mm film in three parts, dreams, paradise lost and related stories with music, poems and street sounds reflected a series of poems in the 19th century. *Paradise* (1995) is a 16mm film in three parts, dreams, paradise lost and related stories with music, poems and street sounds reflected a series of poems in the 19th century. *Paradise* (1995) is a 16mm film in three parts, dreams, paradise lost and related stories with music, poems and street sounds reflected a series of poems in the 19th century.

VERY FRIENDLY CD

**CAUGHT BETWEEN WORLDS**

Stinkin' Lizzyetta
"It's as if *Requiem For A Dream* (Saw) had been remixed. Deep In The Line, *Scorpion* (High Five)

POWERHOUSE CD

Letters

Write to: Letters, *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK
fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, email letters@thewire.co.uk

Damn fool innocence

Re: The Anthony Braxton feature (*The Wire* 252). A nice encompassing of the contradictory Braxton's career, though one should look askance at the artist's ambivalence to his own recorded output. I remember well a *Downbeat* interview from the 70s where Braxton commented on his own damn fool innocence: he confided that he thought his first record on Delmark would sell a million copies and that he'd be received like Anton Webern. Well, William Gaddis, a man of similarly epic sensibilities, thought he'd get the Nobel Prize for his novel *The Recognitions*. Ignorance of the great unwashed notwithstanding, incendiary minds tend to leave indelible marks.

By 1980, Michael Cusimano had put out upwards of 35 Braxton releases (Are you sure about that? – Ed), many of them doubles. Of his *Arista* years, I would call attention to the high water mark of his co-ordinate musics, namely the *C4DM(R) 2 For Four Orchestres* box set recorded at Oberlin College in 1978. The piece is quite clearly and perhaps selfconsciously Weberian, as if a notebook sketch by Rubens had been taken up by an apprentice for a mural's underpainting two generations later. While Gustav Mahler regularly wrote for single orchestras much larger than the combined four at Oberlin, and many serialists have taken up the spatial aspect of sound performance (Boulez certainly with Ensemble Intercontemporain), Braxton is nonetheless revolutionary in conceiving of music as a temporally transforming language via the exploitation of measured time as a phenomenon, rather than a structural device. He may well have more in common with Henri Bergon than Muhal Richard Abrams.

The revolutionary endures primarily to demonstrate the proverbial canon where intellectual tension accumulates over the course of centuries, only to encounter a dramatic discovery that rebounds with the

force to shatter cosmologies and the old quantum leap. To quote Braxton from the 1978 LP box: "The solidification of multi-orchestralism cannot be viewed as an outgrowth of electronic technology because, in fact, the medium had long preceded electronic music. If anything, the reality of multi-orchestral activity forecasted the need for electronic technology because of the dynamic spatial and directional possibilities inherent in the medium."

I've been present at such Braxton ventures as the world premiere of his first symphony for percussion at Arizona State University in 1994, and many later small-unit gigs featuring him on piano in Middletown, not far from his Wesleyan office. His aim and vision can be erratic. The net effect of the journey, however, is exhilarating.

Gary Higgins via email

Beyond description

I just got Hecker's records recently, in part because of your reviews, and after listening carefully to them I felt I had to write you.

If you follow Hecker's work, which I do, you might be misled by reading *The Wire's* reviews of these last two albums. To start with he is being described as a 'glitchmeister', which seems totally inappropriate because it is wrong. What we hear are produced sounds, not glitches. Is Xenakis a 'glitchmeister'? I don't think so.

Specifically, in Keith Moline's review of *Palimpsest*, Hecker's collaboration with Yasusone Tone (*The Wire* 251), stochastic processes are mentioned, when what you hear is wiseset manipulation. And how do I know? Well, it is described by Hecker in the interview included in the accompanying leaflet.

In Jim Haynes' review of *PV Tracks* (*The Wire* 245), he mentions that "slight variations of Max/MSP patches, granularly deconstructed samples" are being

used, while, again, you are unable to hear them, simply because they aren't there. In both cases the focus is on the processes, softwares and applications, on how the sounds have been produced, not on the sounds themselves. Yet both art. Is it possible to read an accurate description of Hecker's sounds, or maybe that is the point?

Paco Valderrama via email

Tart response

I wonder if you're going to ignore the upcoming *Shadow Ring* and *ICCD* LPs like you've done with all the other Swell Radio releases? You really missed a classic experimental LP with *Tart's Bring In The Admiral*, and the last two *Shadow Ring* albums (*Lighthouse* and *Lindus*) have been among the most thought-provoking I've ever had. Let's have a ban (with maybe a few possible exceptions) on reviews of CD-Rs and give more space to quality operators like Scott Foust and co.

Ian Middleton Alva, UK

Border mayhem

A minor error found its way into Edwin Pouncey's primer on Subterranean Metal (*The Wire* 252). Mayhem and Enronymous, are, to the best of my knowledge, Norwegian and not Swedish. Thank you and goodbye, and, by the way, thanks for an excellent read!

Henrik via email, Sweden

Corrections

Issue 252 The artist in the picture accompanying the On Location review of the Progress Ez.04 festival, Slovenia, is Deuce, not retro*sex* galaxy, as stated.

The Joined-up World Of *The Wire*

The Wire 255: on sale from 21 April

With next month's May issue, all subscribers will receive a free and exclusive copy of *Make B 05*, a new compilation of Berlin electronica. See the inside back cover for more details.

www.thewire.co.uk

www.thewire.co.uk is *The Wire's* official Web presence, featuring news, out of print articles, MP3s, video clips, links, mailing list, merchandise and more. New in the site's Web Exclusive section this month: an audio excerpt from Ira Cohen's Invisible Jukebox; the unedited transcript of Susanna Glasser's interview with Venetian Shores; MP3s of some of the tracks discussed in Simon Reynolds' Grime Primer; plus a selection of unpublished photos taken from our cover shoot with Mike Patton. Sign up to The Conduit at www.thewire.co.uk for our fortnightly newsletter containing regular Web updates.

Adventures In Modern Music on Resonance 104.4 FM

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TROJAN EXPLOSION!



JACKIE EDWARDS
THIS IS MY STORY



TROJAN ORIGINAL RIDDIM



DENNIS ALCAPONE
GUNS DON'T ARGUE



CORNEL CAMPBELL
NATTY DREAD

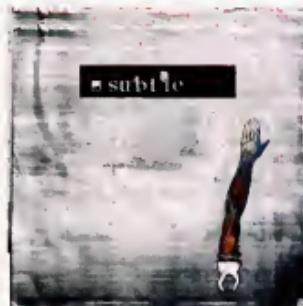


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The new album out now.



FOG "10TH AVENUE FREAKOUT"
Out April 2005



The new Subtle EP "The Long Vein Of The Law" is out in April 2005.
The 12" EP includes two brand new songs including a collaboration with Mike Patton.



Also available : Boombip "Corymb".
An hour of music including Peel sessions, new songs and remixes by Boards Of Canada, Mogwai, Four Tet, Lali Puna, Clouddead and VSons.



Also available : Hymie's Basement "Hymie's Basement" album.
A collaboration between Andy Broder (Fog) and Yon Wolf (Why? from Clouddead).

LEX

Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.
Compiled by The Trawler



Martin Denny RIP

Sad news from Hawaii – **Martin Denny**, a key figure in exotica music, has died, aged 94. Drawing on elements of Asian, South Pacific and Latin American music, and fusing them in a cocktail lounge jazz style, Denny's recordings created a shimmering, Utopian musical mirage that proved hugely successful in the atom bomb obsessed suburbs of post-war North America, as well as exerting an influence on all manner of avant garde sound artists, from Sun Ra to Throbbing Gristle. Despite his advanced age, Denny was actively performing until shortly prior to his death. >> Following the surprise appearance of the legendary reclusive US singer **Jandek** at last year's Instab festival in Glasgow, promoter Barry Esson has once again persuaded the mystery man of outsider song to make the trip across the Atlantic to appear at the first edition of a three day festival that will take place in the new Sage Centre in Gateshead. Named Music Lovers Field Companion, the festival will run over three days in May and will also host to a four hour solo set by Keiji Haino, modestly titled "The Secret Of Music", during which he'll be using more than 40 instruments, plus rare UK appearances by the Italian duo My Cat Is An Alien, Japanese wolfman Takehisa Kosugi, who prefigured the likes of Suicide with the pulses and drones of his 1975 piece *Catch-Wave*, which he will be staging for the first time in a decade, and Luc Ferrari, who will perform the third in his *Thutologos* series with a group including Haino and the US duo Nimpenghi. See this month's Incoming column in *Out There* for more details. And talking of Jandek, the Summersteps label is about to issue a tribute CD containing covers of some of his many tunes by the likes of Makoto Kawaiishi, The Mountain Goats, Jeff Tweedy, Six Organs Of Admittance and others. www.summersteprecords.com >> **Jah Wobble**, the subject of a three disc retrospective last year, will be delivering a talk on the "spiritual and material life" of London at the Lecture Theatre, Chelsea College Of Art & Design on 8 April. Born in Whitechapel and

dubbed a latterday "Cockney mystic" in the tradition of William Blake, around whose poetry he once produced a solo album, Wobble has navigated the vital arteries of London both on foot, taking lengthy walks along the Thames and its tributaries, and as an employee of London Underground during the 80s. He'll be discussing the impact that the teeming metropolis, with its multi-layered history and multi-ethnic stew, has had on his work. info@craneandtheatre.co.uk >> Having completed in 2004 the last scene of his 29 hour work *Licht*, which he commenced in 1977, **Kartheinz Stockhausen** has optimistically embarked upon a similarly massive piece, based on the 24 hours of the day. On 5 May the Milan Cathedral will host the world premiere of *Erste Stunde (First Hour)*, the first instalment of *Klang Sound*. Composed for organ (or optional synthesizer), soprano and tenor, it will feature examples of Stockhausen's experimental attempts to "hyphenate the one-dimensional musician two dimensionally", as the two hands of the organist constantly play in different tempos. Meanwhile, also in May, the German composer will be making an ultra rare UK appearance headlining this year's Triptych festival, which takes place across three Scottish cities, Glasgow, Edinburgh and Aberdeen. For details of its full programme, go to www.triptych05.com, where you will also find some of the "wee Scottish beauties" that have been specially drawn for this year's event by *The Wire*'s very own Savage Pencil >> **Axel Dörner** is known as a timless collaborator in experimental music, working with the likes of Keith Rowe, his style exploring the very grain of the valve of the instrument. However, he also has a taste for bebop, and makes up a group comprising Alexander Von Schlippenbach, Rudi Mahal, Jan Rodter and Uli Jennessen who in 2003 and 2004 faithfully rendered all 71 tunes in the Thelonius Monk songbook over four nights at <at-trane> in Berlin. The entire results are now available on Monk's Casino, a three CD set on Intakt. www.intaktrec.ch >> Although now retired, electroacoustic pioneer **Tod Dockstaader**

has apparently enjoyed a new lease of life in his mid-seventies. Following Pond, his recent collaboration with David Lee Myers, he now issues the first in what will be a three-part project entitled *Arioi on Sub Rosa*, which sees him use a computer in earnest for the first time. The results, in which 59 studio mixes of short-wave atmospherics bleed into one another, are profoundly different in character from earlier works like *Eight Electronic Pieces*, darker, torrential, more expansive. www.subrosa.net >> Legendary Berlin Techno club **Tresor** is celebrating its last days in Leipzigerstrasse due to office block development. After 14 years of clubbing they will host a goodbye festival in the two first weeks of April. They hope to resurrect the club at a later date in a new locale. www.tresorberlin.com >> Austrian art group **Sabotage** recently found that their art had been confiscated by US security. Created for a Contemporary Art Center museum exhibit, their passports for SoS – State of Sabotage, their invented "micronation" – were confiscated at the airport in Detroit after a customs agent thought they might be harmful if imported. The items, taken from Vienna artist Robert Jähnig's luggage, included what the government described as "fantasy passports", along with ink pads, rubber stamps and ink, reports *Sabotage*. www.sabotage-at/sos >> The UK's **Contemporary Music Summer School** (CoMa) has announced its 2005 programme. Taking place at Bretton College in Yorkshire between 23-28 July, the school offers a range of composition, improvisation and performance opportunities catering for all abilities. Music written this year especially for CoMa includes pieces by John Paul Jones, John Cage collaborator Stephen Montague, Michael Nyman, Frederic Rzewski and others. Montague will be also teaching scores and experimental composition while sound artist Will Menter will look at sonic sculpture and environmental sound, among numerous other activities. More information and application forms at www.coma.org. □



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Thursday Afternoon

More Music For Films

Brian Eno: original masters

soundtrack works selection



These instrumentals have been used in so many adverts, documentaries and dramas that they are part of our very DNA (Joe Black)

All tracklistings are as the original vinyl release, except for 'More Music For Films' which is a new collection combining tracks previously unreleased commercially from the 'Music For Films - The Director's Edition' promo (1978) of which only 500 LPs were made, plus tracks from 'Music for Films Volume 2' (1983), which have only previously been released on the Eno boxed set 'Working Backwards 1983-1978'.

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MIA

ACTON WOMAN. BY DAVID STUBBS



"I got the bombs to make you blow/I got the bizz to make you bang," raps M.I.A. Arulpragasm, aka M.I.A. (Missing in Action), on "Pull Up The People" (from her new album *Arular*), a rough tumble of low-budget, high-octane Techno/dancehall, all strafing synths and a squiggy Moog that attaches itself to you like a leech. It's hard to discuss M.I.A.'s music without occasionally falling into the language of the combat zone; moreover, in interviews, the words "guerrilla-style" tumble frequently from M.I.A.'s lips. From anyone else hammering on the peripheries of the UK dance scene, such phrasing might seem like overheated, thoroughly inappropriate rhetoric in war-time terms. For M.I.A., however, the phrase has personal resonance: she's a Tamil refugee from the Sri Lankan civil war, whose father was a liberation fighter and whom she barely saw, whose cousin died in the armed struggle for Tamil independence. "I feel we've been robbed of the word 'revolutionary' because I really like that word," she complains. "In this world, if you're fighting for freedom, for independence, you're no longer a revolutionary, you're a terrorist. It's a tag put on by America."

M.I.A. certainly knows terror — some of her earliest life memories were of running for her life in war-torn Sri Lanka. So when her family finally escaped to England in 1988, the taunts she receives from local racists on the rough South London council estate where she first landed up were more bemusing than distressing to this already battle-hardened child. "They'd call me 'Paki,'" she recalls. "I used to think, 'I don't get it. I'm a Tamil. My life would have been so much better if I'd come from Pakistan!'"

M.I.A.'s family eventually settled in a more ethnically mixed neighbourhood, sandwiched between a rowdy Irish family and a black family. When her house was burgled and their radio stolen, the only sounds available to M.I.A. were the muffled, heavy beats booming through the walls from next door. What might be the ultimate in sink estate misery for some proved to be an epiphany for M.I.A. She had discovered Public Enemy. "Through a wall, that's how I first heard them," she remembers. "I thought, 'What the hell's that?' And I was really impressed by the boys who used to roll up next door — I thought they were very

rowdy but very cool. I loved that there was no prejudice with this scene — all you had to do was understand the beat. That was one of my first positive insights."

M.I.A.'s first artistic forays were into the visual, however — a lifelong flair for drawing and painting eventually landed her a scholarship at London's St Martin's College. However, she was disaffected by what she saw as the remote, ethereal world of the arts, although she did make an important connection with Justine Frischmann of Elastica, who commissioned her to do some sleeve work. Through Frischmann she met Peaches, who encouraged her to make music, and even loaned her a cheap Roland 505 Groovebox. It was on this that she made her first recording, subsisting less on conventional musical ability, more on extraordinary resourcefulness and a sense of purpose and identity, bolstered following a trip to Sri Lanka to investigate the plight of the Tamils and to follow up rumours, sadly unfounded, that her cousin, reportedly dead, was still alive.

Following two successful singles, "Galanga" and "Sunshowers", and considerable media attention as she signed to XL, home also to Dizzee Rascal among others, M.I.A. has cut her debut album *Arular*, a salute to her father, who still doesn't know of her musical career. Despite a raft of bigname producers, the album sounds gratifyingly free of mall-slick, reflecting M.I.A.'s avowed "cut and paste, bish and boosh" philosophy. "It was meant to sound rough," she says. "The idea was to work with what I started out with, a 505, rather than have something over-produced. It's to show that all you need is £100 worth of equipment: it's OK to be 'cheap', rather than spend millions on what ends up being bubblegum music."

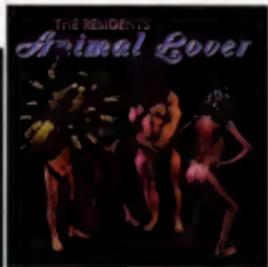
Arular is full of pugnacity and street tumble, glove-off, shoes-off stuff that makes Dizzee Rascal sound positively jucified — its raw, unabashed amateurism belies a gift for melody, well-sculpted backbeat and juxtaposition of improbable pan-cultural and global elements. The opening skit, on learning to speak the word "Ba-na-na", is sarky and sassy. Having absorbed UK culture in double-cuckoo time, fitting from homeland to Timbaland on the peglegged ragga-step of "Fire, Fire", she gobs it right back; the album is splattered with

deliberately mundane lyrical Brit-isms like Colgate, Kate Moss ads, mobile texting and Scrabble, all rendered in facetious migrant Cockney-ness and brazen patois.

But it's also global in its reach, a counter to the miserably monoglot nature of Britmusic, reflecting the sensibility of one who's been shunted all over the world, including the Caribbean, where, visiting relatives, she was scolded for clapping off the rhythm during mass. Patios and Delhi mingle with carefree absurdity on "Dash The Curry", "Hombre" starts out in Indian raga style, a musical red herring, as she skips into a cod Latino lyrical chant. "Amazon" is a hummed, beat-wrecked fantasy about being kidnapped, with a poignant shout out you could imagine was to her estranged dad ("Hello? This is M.I.A./Could you please come and get me?"). "Sunshowers" even boasts an Alvin Lucier I Am Sitting In A Room-style moment, as M.I.A.'s vocals on the chorus are ghosted by a poorer grade recording of the same refrain. Hurling old Kraftwerk and BD electro jam-making devices off the scrapheap and welding them to cheap, fuzzy 21st century basement Techno, is magnificently makeshift, reflecting M.I.A.'s capacity to improvise with the little she's got, which came in handy during one of her first gigs, a PA in Berlin. "I really had to hit the ground running. There was a French DJ there who wasn't following what I was doing at all, the system malfunctioned, both the vinyl and CD starting skipping, the whole thing was a shambles. So in the end, I turned the thing into a stand-up routine with the audience, just made the best of it. And in the end, I got three encores."

M.I.A. isn't above trading on her combat "credentials" — she namechecked the PLC on "Sunshowers", to the consternation of MTV. But she's also aware of the lund, chic fascination for the sartorial aspects of liberation struggle, the gap between the Gap and reality. "I remember the first time I revisited Sri Lanka since we left and I was shopping around just looking around for casual, comfy clothes. And every shop I went to, it was camouflage, khaki, all that fake combat gear. There was no way I could wear that sort of thing in Sri Lanka. All those clothes are banned. I'd have been shot." □ *Arular* is out now on XL

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THE FLICKER EFFECT. BY KEITH MOLINE

"I'm getting carried away." Prompted by a speculative question about his relationship to the various ideological strands that have run through music in Cologne for the last half century, C-Schulz is on a bit of a rant. "If you read about the decades-long 'war' between the Cologne school and the movement of *musique concrète* – for me it's just to laugh at," he continues. "This dusty academic thinking is really absurd." Nor is his ire reserved for the music scene. "In the visual arts it seems like there is more open space for 'outsider' and genius dementium than in the field of academic music. But of course the commercial art business is also disgusting." Carsten Schulz is well placed to cast a critical eye over such matters. Not only has he just released an album, *5.Flicker Tunes* (Song), which blurs the boundaries of academic and popular electronic music forms to such a degree that such terms become meaningless, he's also been at the centre, or thereabouts, of Cologne's evolving, exploratory cultural scene as a musician and film maker for more than 15 years.

As a music student, already comfortable with the music of Ives, Kagel and others via his participation as oboist in an orchestra, he formed longstanding alliances with fellow students Marcus Schmidkler (now of Pluraman), Georg Odijk and Frank Dommer, who went on to set up their own labels dedicated to documenting the nascent experimental Cologne scene of the early 90s. Indeed, Dommer released the first C-Schulz album *10.Hose Horn* on his Entenpfiff label in 1993.

The openness of early *Techno* was of crucial importance to the development of Schulz's ideas. "We had a great DJ Team in Cologne – *Cosmic Orgasm*," he enthuses. "They organised wild parties and besides the strong body experience with dancing, all the drugs and *Techno* attitudes, they sometimes experimented with the bare needles of the turntables at the end of such nights. It was fascinating. Of course nowadays *Techno* is as commercial as any other genre, but it seemed like a lot of things were possible at that time."

There were important new arrivals as well. Hans-Jürgen Schunk (aka Hajsch) and Monika Westphal

completed the line-up of the seminal improvisational sextet *Kontakta*, whose sole release on Odd Size in 1993 doesn't really do justice to the enormous influence they had on the local scene. Following their dissolution, Schulz formed the trio *POL*, whose most satisfying release was a 1995 soundtrack to extreme film maker Birgit Hein's *Baby I Will Make You Sweat* (Odd Size).

An important result of their collaboration was that it sparked Schulz's interest in a different, though related creative discipline. "I began to study visual arts, very late. I was 27. I concentrated on experimental film." It is an interest that Schulz has pursued concurrently with his music ever since, usually alongside his partner Christina Von Greve, who supplies an affecting, dreamlike video for the new album's "Swelan".

With the likes of Jan St Werner, Joseph Sudy and FX Randomz relocating to Cologne in the early 90s, it's understandable that the city began to take on an almost mythic status. Viewed from afar, the scene seemed to embody a bridging of the gap between Cologne's illustrious musical past and a vibrant electronic future. Schulz is a little more circumspect in his evaluation. "Of course," he sighs, "it is a great journalistic topic, 'Electronic Cologne', the town of Can and Stockhausen, the godfather of *Techno*. But it had nothing to do with the electronic scene of the 50s and 60s. And I don't believe that anybody from the scene today sees themselves in the tradition of Can."

Schulz has since retreated somewhat from the centre of things. He says, "The film work takes a lot of time and I'm not very fast at making music. I started to make music with Hajsch, but I was no longer that present in the Cologne scene." Though little solo work was forthcoming, the Hajsch collaborations (released in 2000 on Song!) represented a distillation of Schulz's musical methods, which reach full expression on *5.Flicker Tunes*. "For the new album," he says, "I worked a lot with flickering structures, in the use of instruments and other acoustic elements. For example a lot of

electronic sounds have been transformed by the rhythmical structure of helicopters." I compliment him on the skilful balance of real and synthetic elements on the album. Some fine performances are coaxed from instrumentalists of the calibre of Harald 'Sack' Ziegler on French horn, Kornelia Bitman on violin, as well as Jan St Werner and Andi Toma of *Mouse On Mars*. "I was always interested in the combination of real acoustic instruments and electronic sounds," he explains. "I used different sound sources, ranging from concrete sounds to abstract electronic elements. Some sounds were processed a lot, for example I used a lot of *Vocoder* treatments." It sounds like a pretty rigorous process, I suggest. Schulz disagrees. "My way to create music involves a lot of experiments, improvisations and dead ends."

The album demonstrates an interest in microtonal music, the exploitation of 'the notes between the notes'. "The right tuning of the acoustic material is indeed important for my work," Schulz concurs. "A few cents up or down in the tuning could change the mood of the piece or a single sound completely." Is it a fan of classical composers who explore microtonal intervals – The Specialists, Lou Harrison, etc? "I do like some microtonal academic music," he admits. "Some pieces by Seels. But I have difficulties with the hyper-expressiveness of them. In general I would say the tuning of music in the Western tradition, in classical as well as in pop music, is not the one and only possibility."

For someone who doesn't consider himself to be at the centre of things so much these days, Schulz is a busy man. A regular plungerphone radio show with FX Randomz has led to an album, currently in production. He is also working on a film place with Von Greve in the tradition of the flicker films of Paul Sharits and Tony Conrad. And the oboe? "Over the years I've got a bit bored with the sound of oboe," he moans. "Always the same melancholic mood. And because I haven't been practising I'm no longer any good at playing it." □ *5.Flicker Tunes* is out now on Song!

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03

“GROUNDBREAKING... A WELCOME REINTRODUCTION TO THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MUSIC WEEK”
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APRIL 21 EDINBURGH, U.K.
APRIL 22 GLASGOW, U.K.
APRIL 23 BIRMINGHAM, U.K.
APRIL 24-26 BIRMINGHAM, U.K.
APRIL 28-30 USA & CANADA

MARCH 27 MANABE, SWEDEN
MARCH 29 STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN
APRIL 10 STOCKHOLM, SWEDEN
APRIL 10 PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC
APRIL 11 KRAKOW, POLAND
APRIL 12 ROMA, ITALY
APRIL 13 GROENINGHE, THE NETHERLANDS
APRIL 14-15 AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS
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THE GOLDEN MORNING BREAKS
MAY 22

HANNE HEUBERGER
LITTLE THINGS
JUNE 4

LIVE

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APRIL 16 LISBON, PORTUGAL
APRIL 17-18 PORTO, PORTUGAL
MAY 7 AALST, BELGIUM

WILDFORCE
APRIL 11 BIRGEN, NORWAY
APRIL 12 OSLO, NORWAY
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VENETIAN SNAres



"I've already sold my body for 2005 Snare releases," confesses a fan, junky-style, on Venetian Snare's online blog. A little extreme, but then compulsion and intoxication are the essence of the aggressive sound made by Canadian maverick drif 'n' jazz producer Venetian Snare, aka Aaron Funk (he insists his surname is genuine). He's seamlessly solipsistic battenberg breakcore to a glut of samples sucked from classical, opera and jazz recordings. His latest album *Rossz Csillag Alter Szulettet* (Planet Mu, for example, includes unrecognisable chunks of Bartók, Billie Holiday and Elgar. And as he explains, it's not only his fans that hoover this stuff up like a drug.

"For a period I would literally do crack all night and then after I came down I'd sleep a couple hours, get up and do music," he explains. "I would twist the music until it gave me that same rush I got from the crack, that full euphoric adrenaline blast. Bit of a dangerous experiment but a couple of wicked 32's came as a result. Those were strange days."

Winnipeg born Venetian Snare looks like – and in many ways functions like – a Canadian Aphex Twin. And, like the Twin, he enjoys a fervent fanbase, practises "lucid dreaming" as a creative tool, is profuse in his output (*Rossz...* is his 12th studio album in five years) and is relentlessly innovative with his sound (and, yes, the snare drum does form a fundamental part of it). While the Canadas raw and Gabba scene make up his formative background, he cites his mother's underground punk collection, his gran's piano and a young curiosity with chopping up and rerecording sound (using two ghetto blasters) as key to his musical development.

Snare's debut release, *Shiver in Eternal Darkness*, was an EP on the Isolate label, followed by *Doll Doll* (Hymen) and *Greg Hates Car Culture* (History Of The Future). When Planet Mu's Mike Paradinas heard the latter, he badgered Snare to sign. He still continues to record for a variety of labels, including

Hymen (who put out the highly collectable 3" With A Giant Alien Force More Violent & Sick Than Anything You Can Imagine, which came exquisitely packaged with a plastic model of a 50s TV set), and has also recorded as Snare Man! and Senetian Vnare.

The widespread acceptance of Venetian Snare's output may reflect a latent desire beyond the hardcore IDM community for (dance) music more violated than ever before. The thirst for nasty, adrenaline fuelled noise perhaps befits a time when Western civilisation nudges further onto the precipice of a severed dissonant reality with the rest of the world. "I suppose as they say, the state of art is reflecting the state of society, a sort of cultural gauge. I would agree with this to some degree. What you cannot deny is this constant debate: what is art and what is not art? and in this case, what is music and what is noise? It seems there will always be people who want to challenge these definitions and as a result this act challenges conventional ideologies."

But then even Snare has his limits. Not for him the excruciating, vomit-inducing noise exploration of Hijokaiden, for instance. "Yeah, puking and shitting doesn't make for a good party, but that's just me," he avers. "For me, the music I make is beautiful but for someone else it could be far too extreme. They can't handle this overwhelming beauty." And it is an overwhelming beauty. On first listen, Snare's famously caustic breaks, infatuating stutters in tempo, and spattered split-stom rhythms are foreground elements. But there has always been a fragility there: as the singing noise evaporates, it leaves heart-wrenching melodies to soar in its place.

This juxtaposition of the extremes of the musical palette comes to the fore on *Rossz* (the Hungarian title means *Born Under A Bad Star*, which stitches folk songs, classical works, original orchestral arrangements (including Snare's own violin playing) into his trademark backdrop of shuddering anti-

rhythms. The concept was brought on by an emotionally charged moment when Snare was on tour in Hungary and visited the Királyi Palota (Budapest's Royal Palace). His musings on a pigeon's viewpoint of the world (later consolidated in a poem published on the CD artwork) ignited the project, while heartbreak, which he won't speak about, informed the mood. It's "the dissonant barrage of colossal sorrow", as he puts it. Fittingly, he covers the "Hungarian Suicide Song" or "Gloomy Sunday" (with Billie Holiday on vocals). Snare later discovered that Rezső Seress, who originally wrote it in 1933, killed himself by jumping from his building. "Perhaps he thought he was a pigeon?" he asks rhetorically.

This song title, like all the pieces on the album, is in Hungarian. As Snare's most emotionally bare record yet, this is telling. Reluctant about talking to the press, he hates talking about his music. "I think a lot of music and art is beyond language and titles," he declares. "In that case, titles become irrelevant and in the case of *Rossz Csillag Alter Szulettet*, I do like the fact that language is one step removed. I do feel that I like my music to speak for itself, to have whatever impact it does have on someone solely from the music itself, not clouded by whatever I or anyone else says. There's a sort of purity there. That said, I would go as far as to say even the act of releasing my music is a mutilation of its true intent."

Maybe so, but he admits that its impact is unmistakable. "I guess I am doing an accurate job of expressing myself," he concedes. "I see art as the bridge between artist and listener, a transference of ideas, energy, emotion, everything. It's the same in all art, you have never met Picasso, but you stand and stare into his Weeping Woman, where he once stood, and you feel it. I am very addicted to my own music, so if others become addicted, I have truly succeeded in transferring that onto them." □ *Rossz Csillag Alter Szulettet* is out now on Planet Mu

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RICHARD BARRETT

MILITANT TENDENCIES. BY PHILIP CLARK

With titles like *Negatives*, *Dark Matter*, *lost* and *NO*, it's clear why militant composer Richard Barrett has long existed at an oblique angle to the 'innocence' of the British contemporary music scene. Barrett went into voluntary exile in Amsterdam in 1993. Now residing in Berlin, he has subsequently found his work taken up enthusiastically by internationalist performers such as Ensemble Modern and The Arditti Quartet, rather than by more insular British musical institutions.

Musically, Barrett's forefathers are composers from the more 'inert-heavy' side of the fence. A formative encounter with Michael Finnissy's brushting 1979 ensemble piece *Alongside* had a galvanising impact, and the two composers with whom Barrett finds himself habitually compared and linked are Iannis Xenakis and Brian Ferneyhough. Hard left politics and the writings of Samuel Beckett are the other key ingredients in Barrett's aesthetic make-up and, rarely for a British 'manuscript paper' composer, he also maintains a parallel career as an improvisor. His live electronic duo *FURT*, founded in 1986 with Paul Obermayer, is an important vehicle for driving towards another way of perceiving sound. It also feeds directly into his notated scores. Audiences at last year's Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival (reviewed in *The Wire* 252) heard *FURT*'s latest direction, as Barrett and Obermayer implanted themselves inside Evan Parker's trio with Barry Guy and Paul Lytton.

Barrett was in the UK again in February to attend performances of his latest piano piece *lost* (played by Ian Pace) and an ambitious new orchestral work for the BBC Symphony Orchestra, *NO* (resistance and vision part 1). Now 45, Barrett is at that difficult age for a composer where youthful revolutionary idealism can merge into mainstream posturing. The gentle, reflective sounds of *lost* – in notable contrast to his 1989 piano *gangbang Tract* – has led some to suggest that he has gone soft, in fact, the disorientating structure of *lost* sets up expectations that it confounds. Barrett's structures still say 'fuck you' to those who need to be swum at. *NO* is more problematic. Composers of an experimental bent who deal with stubborn, institutionalised orchestral musicians rarely emerge well. Barrett wants *NO* to

resist outmoded orchestral practice by unpicking orchestral hierarchies and offering a vision of something better.

"I'm taking the orchestra apart," he explains, describing the process of composing *NO*. "Its components are the instruments themselves and their groupings, and I put those together into different combinations. Instruments might, for example, be combined in terms of their pitch register rather than their timbre, so the timbre in a given register constantly changes as it moves from one instrument to another. Each individual in the orchestra then has an obvious part to play during at least one point in the piece within the ongoing musical continuity. The solos are not just for the first flute."

He issued a Marxist programme note to accompany the piece, complete with a condemnation of the Iraq war. It caused one newspaper critic to snipe that there was more fervour in the note than in the music. Surely that title and the note constitute a high-risk act of provocation? "I kept coming back to the title after abandoning it a few times," Barrett admits, "because I thought maybe it's a little too brash and this is not a brash piece. But it was a way to think about music in more explicitly social and political terms than I had done previously. Music which encourages through its very nature the deployment of intelligence on behalf of the audience is already a strong political statement within itself."

"A symphony orchestra is obviously a rather conservative musical institution, surrounded by rules and regulations for composers, performers and audiences which are very difficult to shake," he adds. "The challenge is to take apart that very rigidly structured performing ensemble and to put it together in different recombinations. But from a more optimistic point of view, it's interesting that the orchestra is one of few examples there are of a large number of people having to collaborate with pretty much split-second timing in the process of achieving a common aim."

But isn't orchestral life – musicians obliged to play music they often dislike, for rotten pay – a form of serfdom? "Well, what should one's response to that problem be? The vast majority of orchestral music

written today takes the path of least resistance when it comes to treating musicians as individuals. Orchestral traditions become fossilised in the past and it's unnecessary for orchestral musicians to even listen, only to follow the conductor and stay more or less together with their immediate neighbours. Pretty much everything else is the responsibility of the conductor."

In his work with Kammerensemble Neue Musik Berlin, Barrett has experimented with developing

pieces during an extended rehearsal period and then

boiling down at the information needed for a 20-minute performance to a single sheet of paper. This halfway house between improvisation and composition allows *FURT* to impact into other areas.

"*FURT*'s at a particular moment in its evolution where we might play a completely improvised skin to a composition. Through improvisation we make a sound structure that's incorporated into the piece, played by a third computer controlled by both Paul's and my keyboards. That's the sonic backbone to the composition, and it can be stopped and started at any point. There's no great mystery about this, but actually the mystery comes when we listen back. It not only becomes impossible to tell which sounds are part of the structural backbone and which are improvised, it's also impossible to tell who played what. Although our styles of playing might be slightly divergent when we're in other contexts, *FURT* actually has a musical personality of its own. It's interesting that when the duo became embedded within other ensembles, especially our work with Evan, Paul and I function very much as a single entity within the group."

"Many people from within the improvised music world are very forthright in saying that the making of improvised music is necessarily a more revolutionary act than composing a score which is then interpreted by musicians, because the notated score implies a hierarchy between composer and performer," Barrett observes. "If you view the composer/performer relationship simply in terms of giving and receiving orders, it's easy to come to such conclusions. I may be deluding myself, but I genuinely don't see it in that way." □ *FURT's Dead Or Alive* is out on PSI

Global Ear

A SURVEY OF SOUNDS FROM AROUND THE PLANET.

THIS MONTH: ANA GARCIA MAPS OUT A HYBRID UNDERGROUND SCENE AROUND THE EL ROCHA STUDIO IN BRAZIL'S SOUTHERN STRONGHOLD

SÃO PAULO



Brazilian bacobans: Hurtmold e Mauricio Takara (trumpet), Rogério Martins (clarinet) and Marcos Góes (bass)

"People know São Paulo just as a huge uncontrollable city, it's tense and chaotic," says Daniel Takara, aka Garganema, producer and musician from HipHop collective Instituto. Takara is speaking from the porch of his El Rocha studio – on Vila Madalena, São Paulo's most bohemian neighbourhood – which he set up with his two brothers, Fernando Sanches and Mauricio Takara. "They're usually astounded when they find out what we are doing, but the music scene here has been going on for years and I am proud to be part of it." São Paulo has always been overshadowed by the samba and bossa nova from Rio De Janeiro and Bahia, but Takara and co are instrumental in a new wave of sound bursting out of the city, and few places better exemplify the city's musical singularity than the torrent of sounds emerging from El Rocha.

Over the past ten years, the studio has played host to a wide range of musicians including MC Marcelo D2, folkloric group Nação Zumbi, dub producer/musician Victor Rice and reggae singer Glen Brown. It has also provided a stable base from which a number of diverse artists have begun to break through the underground: improvisers Hurtmold, M Takara, Space Invaders and Cidadão Instigado; hardcore acts Polara, Agaré and Descaré; and rock outfit Forgotten Boys, Van Damien and Hidra. Most importantly, El Rocha has united disparate local creativity under one roof, assembling a collective of musicians that are listed in the credits of almost every release coming out of this part of the city.

The initial idea was to find a small place where the Takara brothers could rehearse their own groups. At that time, Daniel Takara was 18 and playing piano and guitar in five different groups, which ranged from dub to minimal rock and discordant white noise. 14 year old Fernando was already playing guitar, while Mauricio, 12, was mastering the drums. Together they formed Small Talk. "My father wanted to create the recording studio because he was unemployed and has always been involved with music," explains Daniel. "But it was very natural for us to be involved in it too,

because we were always playing in so many different bands and we were exposed to instruments and sound equipment very early on. I mean, we were already listening to Pink Floyd, Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix, samba and bossa nova. And all these synths, guitars, basses, pianos were lying around while we were growing up. The idea became reality when my dad decided to buy the drums."

Although the three brothers are involved in a number of groups that are well known outside of São Paulo, Daniel and Fernando agree that Mauricio has produced the best work in the studio. "He's been involved with the Brazilian music scene since he was eight years old," recalls Daniel. "At that age he had a band with my other brother called Los Quatro Amigos – they would hit cans to simulate a drum. At 14, he was already one of the best drummers on the scene. It was bizarre." Since then, Mauricio has learned how to play a variety of instruments, such as percussion, vibraphone, trumpet, guitar, bass and computer; and he has collaborated with Otto and Instituto.

In 1998, Mauricio formed the avant jazz rock group Hurtmold with five friends who shared a common love for groups like Slint, Fugazi, Tortoise and Chicago Underground. Hurtmold's instrumental tracks combine rock instrumentation with hand percussion, clarinet, vibraphone, harmonica and sampler. So far they have recorded three albums, most recently *Mestro*, and a split CD with Chicago trio The Eternals, all on Submarine Records. The split release led both groups to tour all over south eastern Brazil. At Sonar Sound – São Paulo's smaller version of the Spanish multimedia festival Sonar – Hurtmold were joined on stage by Improvising cornettist and electronic musician Rob Mazurek, who has relocated to Brazil from Chicago.

In 2003, Mauricio created more abstract electronics and minimal rock on his solo album *M Takara* (Submarine). Last year he finished recording his second release on Sieg Records. He also worked in a free improvisation duo with saxophonist Tomasi Rherer and took part in an installation called Dragaeudio at

the Restfest Digital Film Festival. Earlier this year, he toured Poland and Germany with Hurtmold guitarist Fernando Cappi, unveiling a more organic sound.

El Rocha continues to uncover fresh wonders, such as the MC/producer Alkin, who has spent the last few years collaborating with local musicians and creating the label D Ataque Da Raça Humana (DARTH). He was also a member of Academia Brasileira De Rimas – Brazil's first freestyle group. Together with Hurtmold and other friends, they created Chaka Hot Nights, an event that includes traditional DJing, live music and art on the mic.

São Paulo is also home to Open Field, an improvising collective that have not only been releasing records by Krautrock-style group Vurta, but also organising after-hours sessions at Milo's Garage, a small venue where you can listen to the most varied DJ sets and other jams. One recent performer was Carlos Issa, a guitarist who expanded his theater piece Objeto Amarélo into a series of improvised shows and noisy home recordings on Bizarre Music. His shows have caused extreme reactions, but Issa just laughs it off. "São Paulo is very amusing," he declares. "It has 6500 rockers on the streets defending Kiss. Try to steal a Kiss record out of a DJ's case and see what happens – the night finishes in death. But the suspicious looks when a laptop appears on stage are hilarious. The laptop can be much more aggressive than a dozen fuzz pedals."

São Paulo is becoming one of those places many artists move to in search of success or new sources of inspiration. Groups like Cidadão Instigado and Nação Zumbi, both from the north east of the country (where there's more respect for popular culture) have been living most of the year in São Paulo and translating their sound into its culture – such as it is. As Hurtmold's Guilherme bluntly puts it, "It's a city without defined cultural characteristics – there is a mix of everything, and this can be attractive for artists when they want to produce, without having to justify their own sound." □ www.submarineresords.net

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IRA COHEN

TESTED BY EDWIN SO
PHOTOS BY JOHN K



Ira Cohen is a New York based poet, photographer, film maker and traveller whose work is deeply ingrained in the US counterculture of the late 1960s and early 70s. Born in 1935 to deaf parents, he first learned how to communicate by sign language. In 1961 he travelled to Tangier where he edited and published *Gnaoua*, a one-off magazine devoted to exorcism, which introduced early work by William Burroughs, Brion Gysin and photographer/film maker Jack Smith. During the same period Cohen published *The Hashish Cookbook* and produced an LP of trance music by a dervish sect recorded by Gysin and author/composer Paul Bowles.

Returning to New York in the late 60s, Cohen turned his attention to photography. He created his legendary mylar portraits, photographing his subjects inside a reflective chamber. The images perfectly mirrored the mood of the psychedelic era, and Cohen made mylar portraits of Burroughs, Angus MacLise, John McLaughlin, the rock group Spirit, as well as Jimi Hendrix, who remarked that looking at Cohen's mylar images was "like looking through butterfly wings". In a more theatrical vein, Cohen directed his 'phantasmagorical' short film *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda* with his own Universal Mutant Repertory Company, and produced *Paradise Now In Amerika*, a documentary of The Living Theater's 1968 American tour.

In 1970 Cohen travelled to Kathmandu and set up his Slipstreams Poetry Series under the Bardo Matrix imprint, publishing small volumes of poetry and broadsides by such writers as Gregory Corso, Charles Henri Ford, Bowles and MacLise, as well as his own work.

In the 80s he travelled to Ethiopia, Japan and India, where he made *Kings With Straw Mats*, a film about the 1986 Kumbh Mela festival in Hardiwar. In 1994 he produced a CD, *The Major Traveller (Sub Rosa)*, with San Francisco DJ Cheb I Sabbah mixing his readings with Joujouka and Jilala trance music, as well as works by Don Cherry and Ornette Coleman.

Now resettled in New York, Cohen continues to publish his own writings and poetry. His latest projects include *Shamanic Warriors* (New Poets and Celestial Graffiti), both anthologies of writings, paintings, photos, collages and drawings; and *Whatever You Say May Be Held Against You*, a book of poems.

The Jukebox took place at London's October Gallery.

THOMAS CHATTERTON "AN EXCELENTE BALADE OF CHARITIE: AS WROTN BIE THE GODE" FROM CLOPOETRY.COM 1777

This piece is a printed verse from a famous poem. [After reading for a few minutes] This is, of course, Chatterton, who is one of the most wonderful poets in the history of English literature – you should be so proud of him. I don't know how well known he is today, but he is actually the doorway to the Romantic movement. And the idea that he wrote these fake poems by his made-up 'Mr Rowley', the Rowley poems? And was able to convince people in Bristol enough. He started writing these poems at the age of 12, I mean it's unbelievable. I have a poem of his that I carry in a notebook, and it's supposed to be from the letter that he had in his pocket when he killed himself. Though he had some success as a poet and in journalism, when he first came to London from Bristol as a young lad, he was really living on the edge of starvation. He's the beginning and the end of the Romantic movement. Keats wrote a poem called 'Endymion', which he dedicated to Chatterton. **What attracts you to his work and personality?**

The promise he showed and the tragedy. What brought him to my attention first was the fact that my friend Val Myers (the late Australian fantasy painter) loved Chatterton above anybody else. Especially because he was a young boy and, like her, he had red hair. Then there's the famous portrait (by Henry Wallis) of him lying dead on the couch in his garret. But I also read Peter Ackroyd's novel about Chatterton, which I found interesting. Anything about Chatterton is just amazing. He is the English Rimbaud. Rimbaud belongs to another century but his work was done, like Chatterton's, before he was 20, and he's the greatest voice in French poetry. One can't quite say the same thing about Chatterton, but in his last poems, the Elegies, I think he touched on something that moves in a direction you could almost call Rimbaudian.

What made you decide to become a poet?

I don't know when I decided to become a poet, or a photographer. I used to look at Life magazine when I was growing up, and the photographers like Philippe Halsman, who worked for Life, did wonderful things that really interested me. I wasn't thinking about the art of photography at the time, it's just that the series of pictures he took of people jumping in the air, like the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, Richard Nixon and Audrey Hepburn, were fascinating to me. I always loved reading but I didn't understand poetry right off the bat. It appealed to me a lot, but I really thought of myself being a writer of fiction because I loved to read and tell stories.

Having deaf parents also put me in a role of having to communicate for my father and mother. And I learned that deaf people project themselves through sign language into the thing they are describing. So if they're describing an animal in sign language, they take on the visual quality of whatever animal it is. I found that was something which came easily to me, and that could also be a very good actor.

What did your parents think of your poetry?

My father wasn't really thinking about me being a poet, but my mother saw that I was doing this thing and, of course, she loved everything I did. She had a very special feeling about my poetry. She didn't really understand it but she did feel proud. Writing poetry certainly wasn't a talent that she would have manifested.

THELONIOUS MONK QUARTET "MYSTERIOSO" FROM MONK'S MOODS: ORIGINAL RECORDINGS 1944-1948 INAKOS JAZZ LEGENDS 1946

[Listeners closely] I don't know, I can't tell you. I mean, it's so familiar, it's like hearing a childhood memory of

an old hurdy-gurdy song or a carousel or something. So who is that? Is it George Shearing or someone of that vintage?

Think bebop.

I don't know, I remember the first piano players I heard were Art Tatum, Oscar Peterson and people like that. It's *Thelonious Monk* playing an early version of "Misterioso". Oh, it is Monk. I thought it might be early Monk but I had already fixated my mind on these other piano players who were among the first people I listened to. **How did you listen to them – did you see them live or hear them on record?**

To get a phonograph and decide to buy records was a big event for me. My parents, being deaf, never listened to music, so I was doing something really quite unique for myself. In the beginning I always had a certain problem with the idea of music, as if I wasn't allowed to have access to it. When I got a phonograph the first thing I did was go to these record stores where they sold 78s and bought whatever was the Top Ten of the time. I was exploring. It didn't take me too long before I got attracted to jazz, and when I was 16 – underage – I started to go to Birdland. There I would hear Dizzy Gillespie and Slim Gaillard perform, and then I started buying jazz records. When I was a sophomore at Cornell University I became president of the jazz club. We brought Stan Kenton to the campus and released a red 10" album of his music.

That must be quite a rarity now.

Yeah. My roommate at that time, Ross Firestone, who wrote a book about Benny Goodman, still has a copy. I'm pretty good at keeping things, but that Kenton record eluded me somehow and I don't have it anymore.

Did you ever see Monk play?

I have a feeling I did but I don't recall. Maybe not, he meant a lot to me and I knew people who knew him very well. I wrote this long poem about him called "Homage To Monk", which is in my most recent book *(Chaos & Glory)*.

CECIL TAYLOR

"DOUBLE HOLY HOUSE"

FROM DOUBLE HOLY HOUSE (FMP) 1968

Is that an American? It's close to being a dada kind of thing. [Piano comes in] Is that Cecil?

What do you think of his use of poetry and jazz?
I've never heard Cecil do too much of that. I'm not saying he's not a poet, it's just that I don't know him as a poet. I was not so aware of Cecil Taylor's music when I first began listening to jazz. Maybe he wasn't performing at the places I went to. Over the years, though, I've heard him play a number of times and bought records by him. In every way he is a superstar of the arts and a great storyteller. We met one time at the Living Theater at a New Year's Eve party and it turned out that we had both seen [Galina] Ulanova dance in *Romeo And Juliet* when she made a rare appearance in New York. She was 51 and it was the last year she danced. It left an incredible impression on me, and Cecil said, "Oh yes, I was going there every day and how much I appreciated her entrées" [much chuckling]. So we had that thing in common.

BRION GYSIN

"I AM – MACHINE POEM"

FROM REIRE DU 20-21 (ALSA MARSHAL) 1960

[Instantly] Well, of course, this is my old friend, the one and only Brion Gysin.

How did you become friends with him?

When I was in Paris I went to George Whitman's famous bookstore Shakespeare & Company and Brion was actually sitting in there for George, who had gone out to do something. He was there for about half an hour and we started having a conversation, and one thing led to another. We both had Morocco in common

and a great love for the best grass in the world. After that, I visited him at the Beat Hotel. I had a splendid cut of grass from Tangier and he was very happy to share that with me. He showed me the *Gremlachine* and I looked through the portals at his face on the other size. It was illustrated inside with his drawings, and as the *Gremlachine* rotated they turned into incredible cartoons. And looking at his face I saw him pass through every archetype that he could possibly have contained, from Grumpy Gysin to gayest Gysin the Roman preconcius.

I'm a character in [Gysin's novel] *The Process*, he calls me Lenny Louigne or something. But he did say one thing there that I will always cherish. He said I was as handsome as a Hindu god – well, I was 27 or something at that time.

WILLIAM BURROUGHS

"VALENTINE DAY READING"

FROM REVUE DU 45-47 JUIN MARS 1968

[Instantly] Well, I don't have to think too long about that. [Listens to more of the track] It was recorded on Valentine's Day in 1965? My God, it seems so long ago. The last millennium, huh? I like the sound effects on this.

You do?

Yeah, because they're fun. Someone gets shot, a car races off, it's somehow amusing to me. Burroughs was satirical, so you could play "The Star Spangled Banner" behind something he was reading and that would sound good. For the first record I made [The Majoro Traveller], the music I used is really great music because I required that.

You also published Burroughs and Gysin in your magazine *Gnose*.

I was the first one to publish Brion's seminal piece [on Joujouka] "The Pipes Of Pan", and pieces of Burroughs's a novel *Nova Express*, which he was writing at the time. I knew them both in Tangier as well as Paris.

What are your thoughts about Burroughs being associated with the Beat movement?

Burroughs is totally separate from the whole Beat thing, except that he was the professor or magus for them and a guiding light because they respected him, and [Allen] Ginsberg was his lover. He actually started writing because he knew Kerouac and he tried to write a story called something like "And The Hippos Were Boiled In Their Tanks", which was a collaboration with Kerouac. Nobody has ever printed it that I know of. You can't really read it unless you get it to in a library. I mean, how bad could it be? Burroughs, Gysin and Kerouac, all those guys are T-shirt material now. **But you never were T-shirt material, were you?** Well, I'm on a T-shirt. At least my name is. I could be T-shirt material now that I'm 70 because there's nobody really left. The ones that are left are not necessarily as active as I am. Also, I see in myself certain qualities that I know none of these had or could touch. Burroughs wasn't a poet and neither was Gysin. They weren't beatniks either, but they got pulled under that umbrella because of their association with Allen Ginsberg. I get called a Beat because I have a beard and I'm sometimes hard to get along with, but I don't piss in anybody's shoe...

ANGUS MACLISE

"UNIVERSAL MUTANT #3"

FROM THE WIRE DAPPER 6 SPECIAL EDITION [THE WIRE] 1969

[Instantly] Is that Angus? Where's that come from?

It's a track that Quasimodo donated to a Wire compilation in 2000.

I helped [Quasimodo's] Tim Barnes get a lot of the music he has on his label and now he's becoming such a hero, I can't believe it. Tim is a great guy who started with Angus and, through that, got to meet people like La Monte Young, Tony Conrad and

Christopher Tree, which broadened his knowledge a lot. I think it's great that I met Tim through Angus and it's amazing how many people, like him, feel personally about Angus's poetry. I feel that way as well and I would like to live long enough, and find the right moment, to devote enough time as I could in getting Angus's writing out in book form.

What qualities did Angus have that made him special to you?

I thought his music was great, he was a great drummer. As a musician he was more than that. He did conceptual things that were brilliant, everything from recording the winds of Gurdasgar in Nepal to shortwave broadcasts. Everything was music to him and I never heard anybody play better than him. He'd beat away at his suitcase on the road to Kathmandu, or somewhere else on route, until his hands were bloody. Angus would switch from focusing fully on his music and then back to his writing. He could never decide. He didn't like to be photographed, but one night I took this great portrait of him called *The Methedrine Cardinal*, which is one of my all time favourite photographs. I used infrared and regular colour film and we changed the costumes a few times during that one night session.

When did you meet him?

We met somewhere in Paris while I was looking for [poet and publisher] Piero Heliczer's house. I bumped into Angus in the street and near us there was a plaque on the wall that said "Dante lived here".

When I came back to New York after a long stay in Morocco I went to hear Angus doing a *Dreamweapon* presentation, which included John Coltrane on viola, who looked like Prince Valiant in those days. I had with me a tape of the *Jilala* music, which was recorded by Brion Gysin and Paul Bowles and eventually released on my own Trance label. I played it that evening for Angus and the other musicians and immediately we had this connection.

We had lovely connections in India, and finally in Kathmandu where we spent a lot of time together. Angus is the closest thing to being a brother poet of anybody I've met on the path. Anyone who ever met or knew Angus was touched by him as a person and how he incorporated himself into everything.

The trekking playing is called "Universal Mutant" – weren't you involved in something called the Universal Mutant Company?

As an underground film maker I started a group called the Universal Mutant Repertory Company, because that was where I was at. I even found some strange emblem in a costume shop that I used. It was like a golden upside down Christmas tree that was rather beautiful to look at. I got a whole bunch of them and gave them to people who agreed to be photographed. I still have a jacket where I had sewn one on the back. When Angus died in Kathmandu you famously took a picture of his funeral pyre. What prompted you to take that photograph?

I have a lot of special photographs, but that picture is so extraordinary. It was extraordinary enough as a moment, and the reality that Angus was being burned on a pyre and then his skull cracked open. I was coming down off a long usage of opium and felt quite sick. Breathing in all of those fumes was almost killing me. I was very close to the fire and I saw the skull crack open and the pink fluorescent coils of that magnificent brain – up all night on speed, talking about Chilean jaguar cults and special initiation mysteries – were suddenly exposed.

I was amazed to see that and then I wanted to take a photograph of it. I have a tendency to come in close and not take the photograph with the long view. I was trying to get closer to get a shot of the brain while it was cooking in the skull cap, before it turned into some indescribable nothingness that floated away on the air. I couldn't get that close to the fire, so I took a

couple of steps back and then at a certain point I stopped and took the photograph. Then when I got the contact sheet back I saw that the whole image looked like an incredible head. The log underneath was his jaw, the straw on top was his hair, the skull was in the place of the eye and it was indescribably Angus in a certain way. Not as he actually looked, but somehow suggesting in a transformative way where he could be at that moment. It's just an amazing picture. It's magic.

JACK SMITH

"JACK SMITH READS 'LES EG'S DAMNEES'"

FROM LES EVENING GOWNS GARNIERES – 56 LUDLOW STREET 1962-1964 VOLUME 1 [TABLE OF THE ELEMENTS] 1964

[Listens for several seconds] It's Jack Smith. I knew Jack very well, is that Angus and Tony Conrad playing on this as well?

You're spot on.

They sound so lyrical and beautiful there with the music they're playing for Jack. They tended not to play like that usually. Angus has much more of a beat. **Can you give me a memory of Jack Smith?**

Listening to that is almost bringing tears to my eyes, because I loved Jack a lot. He was stunningly funny in a lot of his work and so over the top, but on the he sounds more romantic.

You appeared in one of his films, didn't you?

Well, I held an elephant tusk until I thought my arms would fall off, even though there was no film in the camera. I loved his films and his whole character, he was the most orchidaceous genius that I ever met. Jack was a very interesting over the top writer. He couldn't write what we call poems, but when he did write things they were very poetic and far out. Nobody else could write like that, and anyone who knew him was affected by his language, his conversation and his humour; which was top drawer. Every time he did something he would find a completely new way of doing it.

Once I went over to his place very late at night just before I left the States to go to India. We had had a big argument before while talking to each other, but somehow I wanted to see him before I left. Because I cared enough and I had things I was giving up that I thought he might like to have – like an orange sequinned evening gown and a big hat with flaming orange sequins. I came there with Petra [Vogt] and the painter and theatre designer Robert Laing, who was afraid to go there because he thought Jack might beat him up. I said, "I'll protect you." He was very nice when he saw us downstairs. He said, "Ahhh, come on up," and threw out the key for us. We went up and spent this very pleasant time together, it was very human and touching and there was none of the argument or malice that had existed between us earlier. Suddenly he wanted to prepare some food for us – and then he put together a dish of fried eggplant and grapefruit. Can you imagine that? I saw him there while he was making it and he was mumbeling under his breath. "This'll get 'em!" laughs. Orchidaceous is exactly what I mean: he was like an orchid, a unique genius in a category of his own.

TUCKER MARTINE

"CALL TO PRAYER (TANGIER)"

FROM EAT THE DREAM: MOROCCAN REVIEWS [TINDER PRODUCTION] 1994

It sounds like India to me. Tangier? Is that the *Jilala* record? It's something in that vein. Is Eat The Dream?

That's correct. I just wanted to play it to try and take you back to the period you spent in Kathmandu. I feel so at home with that music, it sounds like what I heard in the cradle. I try to get as much of this as I can when I see it, but now there's so much of it out there that you can't keep up with it at all any more. **What were you doing out there?**

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I initially settled in Tangier, hopping from one hotel room to another. One would be only 30 cents a day and you'd have to get a basin and put it in a wooden frame to get water in the room. One of the first people I met there was George Andrews, who had a house in the Medina. He was a poet and he did the first *Book Of Grass* [An Anthology Of Indian Hemp] before a lot of other books came out on cannabis, which I was encouraging him to do. He ended up doing it together with Simon Vinkenborg, who's another old friend. So little by little I started getting into the life there and I loved it. It was a bit tricky to figure out how to do it at first, but I loved it and the whole atmosphere of it was just terrific and made for me, really. Brion [Gysin] was not there at that moment but I did meet certain people from his contingent – and when I went to Marrakech I finally met Paul Bowles.

You published a book with him for your Slipstreams Poetry Series.

Eventually when I was living in Kathmandu and publishing a series of rice paper books, I wrote to him and he sent me "Next To Nothing", which was a long poem that he wrote after Jane Bowles died. Years afterwards when I was talking to him in Tangier one day I said, "What was your main impulse in writing that poem?" And he said, "I wrote it because you asked me." I suddenly realised that if I hadn't asked him for a manuscript to publish he might not have written it. **You also published a play by Beat poet Gregory Corso.**

That was [1974's] *Way Out*, which Gregory called "a discord", it never got published in any book, they always left it out. When he was 23 he was in Paris and he left that manuscript in Alan Zion's house, which was a popular meeting place for Americans and other expatriates. When I met Zion in Kathmandu, he saw that I was doing something with poetry. He said, "I want to give you this", and he gave me the manuscript which Gregory had left with him all those years ago. He just decided to give it to me when he got to Kathmandu – just like I once did in Nishapur with a bottle of mercury that Tony Conrad gave me.

What's the story behind that?

They found this bottle of mercury that someone had left in a doorway on 42nd Street. It was really huge and very heavy, but he carried it up to his loft. Then he filled up a small bottle for me out of that and I used some of it in the last scene of my film *The Invasion Of Thunderbolt Pagoda*. I had this whole bottle filled with mercury and I took it with me on my trip when I left New York, I couldn't leave it behind. I got to Nishapur [in Iran] where I saw the tomb of the poet Omar Khayyam, which looked a little futuristic, and also the tomb of Farid Ud-din Attar, another great [12th century] poet, the author of *The Conference Of The Birds*. It was during Ramadan, and when I walked inside I was by myself, there was nobody else in there. I came to the sarcophagus of Farid Ud-din Attar and I bravely lay down on my back on top of it. I'm not trying to claim a great mystical thing transpired, but I felt something of his spirit. I was lying on top of his sarcophagus, which was covered with letters, probably from his poems or about his life, in beautifully carved Persian calligraphic script. When I got up I took that bottle of mercury I had carried with me from New York and poured it out all over the lid of the sarcophagus, and it ran shimmeringly into all of those letters. Then I left and I like to think that someone walked in afterwards and saw that liquid mercury shimmering all over the top of Attar's tomb. Would they think that it was the distillation of Attar's bones, or did they think that a guy from New York was crazy enough to pour it out as some kind of a positive and reverential gesture? □

For more information on Ira Cohen's work, go to www.theiraCohenKushidProject.org and www.bagovage.org





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FLAMBOYANT NEW YORK SINGER ANTONY AND HIS GROUP THE JOHNSONS HAVE TRANSCENDED THEIR VAUDEVILLE ORIGINS TO Emerge AS PURVEYORS OF THEATRICAL, ANDROGYNOUS BALLADRY THAT'S CAUGHT THE ATTENTION OF EVERYONE FROM LOU REED TO BOY GEORGE. MARC MASTERS MEETS THE MAN WITH A "PERMEABLE STYLISTIC MEMBRANE"

CRACKED ACTOR



"The 90s was a lonely time for artists," insists Antony Hegarty, singer, pianist and leader of the revolving group known as The Johnsons, speaking via mobile phone before a show at the Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh. "Especially in New York, so much work was created in solitude, work that you never thought would move beyond its tiny locale. All these amazing new kids – Gwendolyn Banhart, Animal Collective, Joanna Newsom – I'm just so glad they're here. We got through a drought and suddenly everyone hiding in the woodwork has come out to greet us."

Antony's alignment with the "new folk" movement might surprise anyone familiar with his work. His roots lie in New York's performance art scene, and his latest album with The Johnsons, *I Am A Bird Now*, features dramatic melodies and intricate piano driven arrangements, a contrast to the sparse, rustic sound of Banhart and Newsom. His music most recalls the theatrical, androgynous balladry of the 1970s, as practised by David Bowie, Roxy Music and Lou Reed circa Transformer and Berlin. Tracks like the moaning melodrama "My Lady's Story" and the aching hymn "Man Is The Baby" are epic, gender-bending torch songs, replete with bombastic piano, mournful strings and cinematic crescendos. They also showcase a quality Antony shares with Banhart and Newsom: an irritable voice. His gripping, octave-climbing warble is bracingly soulful and unabashedly emotional. "I have report cards from second grade saying 'Antony loves music, but unfortunately he can't hit any of the notes,'" he says, laughing. "My singing is constantly shifting and malleable. I don't want to be this fortress of a single style. I think of it in terms of permeable versus impermeable membranes. I have a very permeable stylistic membrane."

Despite this malleability, *I Am A Bird Now* is impressively unified, especially considering that 20 different musicians contribute, including Banhart, Reed and Antony's boyhood idol Boy George. "I wanted to create something where when you get to the end, you're at the beginning again, so it feels like a circle," explains Antony. "Our first record [2000's *Antony And The Johnsons*] was a theatrical and I've been moving toward something more intimate. This record is much more intimate and I wanted it to sound that way, with everything very close." Antony's collaborators do make their presence felt. On "You Are My Sister", a gospel-timed pean to familial love, Boy George's singing is boldly moving. "Having him sing with me was a revelation," beams Antony. "Given my relationship with him as a kid in my mind, it was quite emotional. He sang his heart out, and I'll always be grateful to him for that." Lou Reed adds a spoken opening to "Fastid Of Love", whose horn-inflected R&B swing evokes the soulful prayers of Otis Redding, another hero of Antony's. "[Lou and I] share a love for those Shangri-La-type songs with little spoken intros," Antony admits. "His presence created so much more context. It fills the song with this chainsaw edge of possibilities that might not have been there before he stepped into the room."

Antony and Reed first collaborated when Reed invited the singer to interpret his Transformer classic "Perfect Day" for his 2002 album *The Raven*. Joining Reed's subsequent tour, Antony often sang another Reed staple, "Candy Says", as an encore (a version is included on the live 2004 Reed album *Animals/Serenade*). "It was a very emotional experience," gushes Antony. "There were nights where I felt like I was being cradled up to heaven, singing about Candy Darling and evoking that whole world." Darling, a transvestite and Warhol superstar, was a fixture in the downtown art world of the 1960s, tales of which inspired Antony to infiltrate New York's performance scene decades later. Darling also plays a role in *I Am A Bird Now*, pictured on her deathbed on the album's cover shot, taken in 1974 by artist Peter Hujar. "I was looking at Devendra's record cover for *Rejoicing In The Hands*, realising I'd forgotten that record covers are an opportunity to put the greatest art forward. It doesn't have to be something ridiculous picture of me, it can be something much more significant," asserts Antony. "For the Lake EP, [Hujar's estate] gave me a close-up from the same series. You can see that it says Cabini Hospital on the sheets of the bed. As a New Yorker, I've visited so many friends in that hospital. My friend Paige died there and she was like the Candy Darling of my generation. There's a lot of energy around the idea of Candy Darling. For me and the world I come from she's an icon."

Antony has lived in New York since he moved from California in 1990 at the age of 19, intent on joining the cabaret world he had seen depicted in the 1988 documentary *Mondo New York*. "I went to finish school, but really it was just to be there," he recounts. "I needed to get to the city before I hit 20. I felt like it was the last stop, really." He began performing with the avant garde ensemble Slacklips at the Pyramid Club, staging surrealistic dramas, wearing extravagant costumes (he has called the group's aesthetic "blood, bags and gore"), and singing over his own prerecorded music, all in front of mostly drunken afterhours audiences. "I went through this sort of cupcake period, where I had designs making me out to be. It was more costume based," recalls Antony, whose shows are now more music oriented but still exude theatricality. "It's all become more integrated. There's less separation between the different aspects and I'm glad for that."

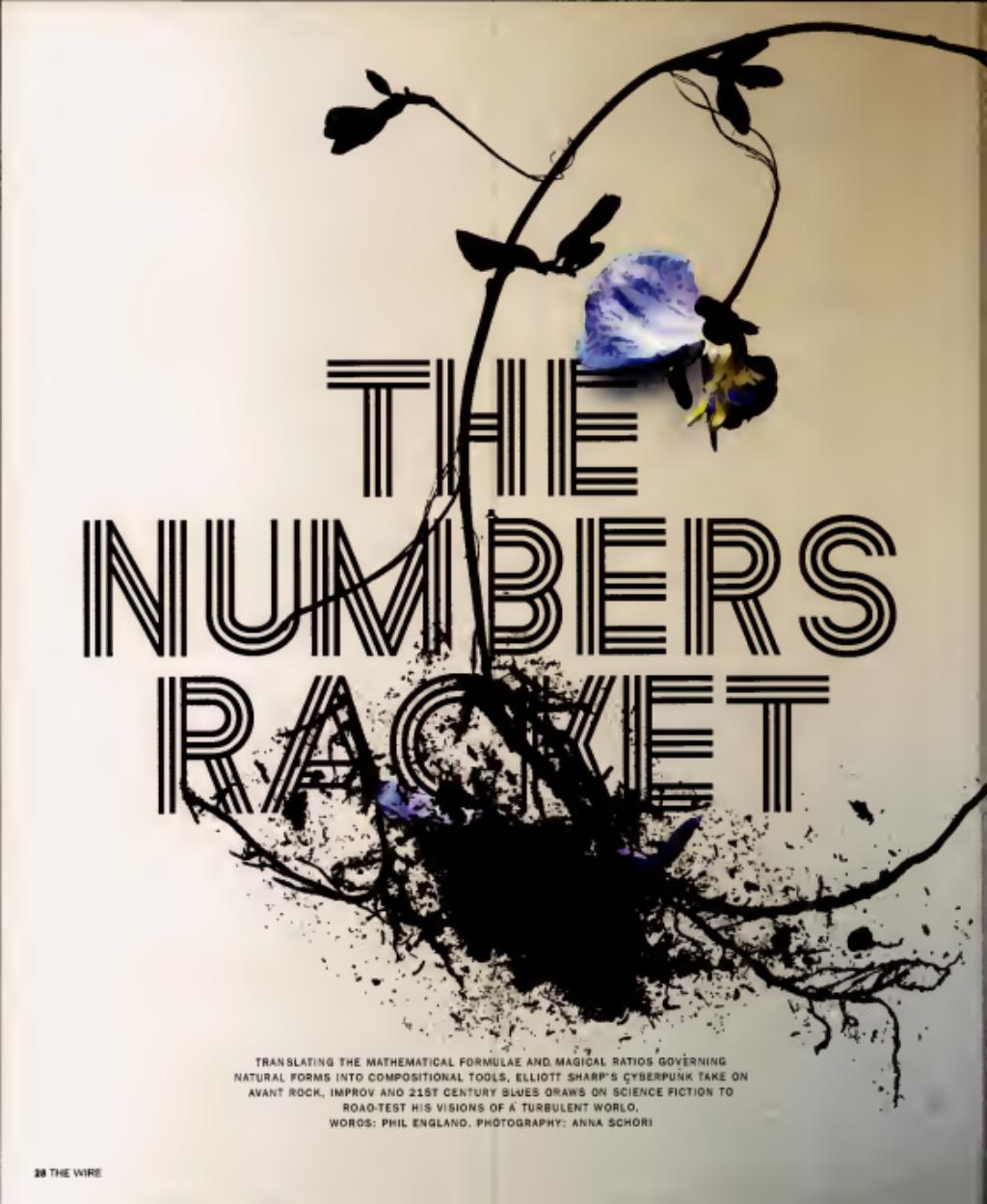
As he worked with more musicians, Antony dubbed his rotating group The Johnsons in homage to Mavis Johnson, the legendary drag queen and gay rights activist. "The Johnsons started out like a performance project," he says. "It was an extension of what I did at the Pyramid, which was mostly performance, and occasionally there'd be a song. We recorded our first record in 1998. And then William Basinski invited me to play at the Kitchen and it was the first concert I'd ever done with a full band. Johnsons became a loose term that encompasses all the people that I work with." Those initial recordings

impressed Current 93's David Tibet, who released the group's debut on his Curio label. As The Johnsons established a residency at Joe's Pub that same year, Antony also pursued other performance outlets. In the film Animal Factory, directed by New York theatre veteran and indie film mainstay Steve Buscemi, he sang to a prison cafeteria filled with actual inmates. Later, he collaborated with film maker Charles Atlas for a Whitney Biennial project entitled TURNING, with The Johnsons playing in front of Atlas's live video projections of rotating female bodies. "It's my favourite thing that I've ever done," he declares. "When I saw those pictures of beautiful girls turning, it was the first time I saw something that I could look at forever."

Antony And The Johnsons also spent nearly three years working on *I Am A Bird Now*. "We've got so many recording sessions that went into finally choosing a few songs," he sighs. "It was pored over with a fine tooth comb." The process was so overwhelming that Antony nearly gave up, until Banhart intervened. "He picked me up at the end of 2003. I was at my wit's end, about to abandon the project," Antony admits. "And this lad that's ten years younger than me took me by the scruff of the neck and said, 'I love what you're doing, come and do a guest spot at my concert.' He welcomed me into that group. I just felt so inspired by what I was seeing in his work."

"I've realised that my creative process is accumulative," he continues. "I slowly assess components, and then put them in relationship to each other. That's how this record was put together. It was very accumulative. It might be a little scrap of words and then some music, or it might come all at once, I love arranging things. Different contexts create different kinds of meanings." The end result on *I Am A Bird Now* is strikingly simple and direct. Antony takes straight-at-the-heart shots at themes like family, death and especially gender, a subject the singer's androgynous appearance and vocal range have often blurred. "For Today I Am A Boy", for example, boils Antony's own identity conflict down to their core: "One day I'll grow up/And be a beautiful woman/One day I'll grow up/And be a beautiful guy/But for today I am a child." For today I am a boy." "People say the album's very direct, but I think a lot of it is very heavily veiled," he laughs. "For Today I Am A Boy" is direct. It's very plain. When I wrote it, I felt shame about putting it out there. But it became an exciting challenge for me, to push through that and see if there was any value to the message. And it ended up being very rewarding."

"I'm interested in how far material that's generated from a very specific local community and set of imagery can move beyond that and be appreciated for different reasons," he concludes. "I don't think it's a prerequisite that people get all this stuff to get what's going on emotionally. It's wonderful that people are finding their own way through my stuff, finding it useful or meaningful." □ *I Am A Bird Now* is out now on Rough Trade (UK) and Secretly Canadian (US)



THE NUMBERS RACKET

TRANSLATING THE MATHEMATICAL FORMULAE AND MAGICAL RATIOS GOVERNING
NATURAL FORMS INTO COMPOSITIONAL TOOLS, ELLIOTT SHARP'S CYBERPUNK TAKE ON
AVANT ROCK, IMPROV AND 21ST CENTURY BLUES DRAWS ON SCIENCE FICTION TO
ROAD-TEST HIS VISIONS OF A TURBULENT WORLD.
WORDS: PHIL ENGLAND, PHOTOGRAPHY: ANNA SCHORI



"People think there's one musical representation that's the entire mapping of someone's personality or thoughts," says Elliott Sharp, "and it's not like that. You can think in a lot of different modes. It's like using different languages. If I were a novelist I wouldn't want to restrict myself to the letters between P and V. I like to use a lot of vocabulary, I have a personal syntax for it and I like to find different ways of orchestrating it."

The diverse range of manifestations of Sharp's music is impressive. He is a blues guitarist of great invention and power as well as a composer, improviser and saxophonist. He has written for string quartet, composed process-based pieces for instrumental rock group, invented and modified instruments, and worked in the arena of electroacoustic composition. On occasion this remarkable game-hopping capacity has been mistaken for the mark of the dilettante, the thirtysomething amateur.

However a batch of recent releases lays this shallow charge to rest. Though wildly different in terms of style and instrumentation, they reveal that Sharp has strong and mature statements to make in many arenas. *Radio Hyper-Yahoo* – a collaboration with subversive wordsmiths – critiques contemporary US politics with a populist yet uniquely mercurial pop-rock sensibility; the orchestral *Canting*, commissioned by German radio, is a compelling, fully notated composition; *Velocity Of Hue*, his first album of improvisations on modified acoustic guitar, has received universal praise; and a recording of his most recent process composition, *Radotonia*, for an ensemble of wind and brass, shows the mature flowering of long-term compositional interests.

Sharp's status as an outsider is the self-imposed result of his staunch independence and refusal to compromise. For Sharp this is not a bad place to be; rather it is the place where new forms are road tested and hybrids emerge. "I always lived being on the edge of things," he declares, "because at that point where you're interfacing between two different zones which are relatively stable, you get a kind of unsettled state, a chaotic state. New stabilities and new predictabilities will eventually form but there's a moment at which it's very exciting."

Sharp's ability to draw on diverse influences while creating bridges between scenes is evidence of his networking acumen and a courteous sociability that has gone some way towards reining in the traditional relationships inside the New York counterculture. Within two years of arriving in New York City in 1979, he was working with the likes of Bill Laswell, Olav Dara, Charles K. Noyes, Philip Wilson, Mark Miller, Bobby Previte and David Linton in versions of his rock group *I/S/M*. For six months he held a regular club at a "dark and claustrophobic dump" called A7 on Tuesday nights where dozens of musicians passed through an open-membership version of *I/S/M*. "I was trying to bring these scenes into one space at the same time," he recalls. "I brought in improvisers, I had [British percussionist] Paul Burwell on one of those gigs and [People Band drummer] Terry Day. I wanted the gigs to be 'free noise Afro-Tibetan rock improvisation with a groove.'

"When I came to New York I found great things about all of these scenes, but also things I didn't like," he continues. "The Improv scene around John Zorn seemed very much based on the early [Derek Bailey]

Company model. It was very didactic with very strict rules about what you could and couldn't do, and they completely ignored rhythm. And then there was the scene around Glenn Branca and Rhys Chatham, which was a little too minimalist, a little too monomaniacal, even though I liked the fact that Glenn thought a lot about acoustics. The acoustic basis for whether things go together well or not was important to me and something that I'd always been interested in from my work in math and science."

Carbon – the rock group that evolved out of *I/S/M* – "was much angrier, much more wired". Even so, it lasted 12 years, albeit with a changing line-up. Their first gig is excerpted on the *Homestead* album that documented the five-day *Speed Trials* festival in May 1983, where the track "YYTYNMVD" sits snugly alongside The Fall, Swans, Live Skulz, Sonic Youth, Lydia Luce and Arto Lindsay's *Toy Killers*. "A lot of the other stuff from that early session was pure noise," says Sharp, "as were a lot of things that were going on with the bands at that time."

Sharp's musical studies started early. He played classical piano from the time he was six. His mother had survived the Holocaust by hiding in France and her father had survived a concentration camp. As a consequence, perhaps, his parents had high expectations and pushed young Elliott hard. "I was expected at seven years old to be a Nobel prize winning scientist and a classical concert pianist and whatever else," he sighs. "It was convinced that the piano gave me asthma. I nearly died when I was seven years old or so, I was in hospital for ten days. When I recovered I switched to clarinet – everyone seemed to think that it would be good for my lungs to play a wind instrument."

At 17 Sharp was awarded a National Science Foundation grant to study science at Carnegie Mellon University. "I'd been doing some research of my own mutating fruit flies with microwaves. So, I went off to Pittsburgh but I was much more interested in music. I'd gotten an electric guitar before I left. I spent most of my time in the lab designing fuzzboxes and playing with a seven-head tape recorder. I got a DJ slot in the university's station from midnight to 4am and they had a great collection of weird stuff. I also picked up all those ESP records for 99 cents each in Pittsburgh. I found Harry Partch's music and his book [*Genesis Of A Music*], also Xenakis's book *Formalized Music* and his electroacoustic record on Nonesuch, which was very important for me. Plus all the psychedelic music and Country blues and Indian music that was floating around. It was really a great time to have open ears."

In 1969 Sharp went to Cornell University to study anthropology "because it seemed about the one major where I could just about do anything. The department had good access to hallucinogenics too – a lot of people doing fieldwork in exotic places. The revolution was coming down, our campus was occupied by the National Guard. I managed to get arrested at least one time there and another time in Buffalo. All these things contributed to more distancing from academia and just delving into music."

In 1972 Sharp switched direction and went to Bard College, partially, he says, "because [free jazz trombonist] Roswell Rudd was teaching there. I was very interested in his playing and his arrangements, especially the work with Archie Shepp." Sharp took up

the alto saxophone as well as studying electronic music, jazz, aesthetics, information theory and ethnic musics. His formal studies continued with a Bachelor of Arts at the State University of New York in Buffalo with tutors Morton Feldman, Lejaren Hiller and Charles Kell, though they were interrupted for a year after he was arrested during a student demonstration and charged with stabbing the head of campus security. He ended up spending 12 months fighting a potential 35 year sentence. Eventually the charges were dropped on the proviso that he did not sue the city for false arrest and police brutality.

One of Sharp's principal and ongoing compositional interests has been in process-based works, which deploy small cells of musical information as core materials for improvisation, or for recombination and mutation by the players. He refers to these compositions as his "algorithms" works and he makes them freely available for download on his Website to encourage people to play and study them.

Another key compositional concern has been the use of Fibonacci numbers [a number sequence derived by adding two numbers together to get the next in the sequence] to determine both tuning ratios and the internal structures of works such as *Marco Polo's Argan* and *Self-Squared Dragon*. The average ratio between the numbers in the Fibonacci series is the proportion known as the Golden Section, which is found in ancient architecture as well as occurring in spiral-related forms in nature.

Sharp came across this idea in the mid-80s when, out of frustration, he was on the verge of moving out of New York – he even considered an invitation from a Bolivian musician to move to his country. Then one night he had an epiphany: "I'd eaten some mushrooms, and I'd been reading a lot of mathematics books again, just because it seemed hermetic and appropriate to my state of mind," he recalls. "I'd always been obsessed with Fibonacci numbers and the Golden Section as a way of looking at natural forms and processes – which is what mathematics always has been for me. It's not a formula for doing things but it's an abstraction, a way of making a generalised metaphor for things that occur naturally. "So with these mushrooms in my system I decided to make tunings from Fibonacci numbers and saw the correspondences with ratios from the Just Intonation tuning system. I tuned my guitar up, sat down in front of my amplifier with a blanket over my head so I wouldn't disturb people too much. And I just played and played and played. I felt that there was something to be explored so I wrote a bunch of compositions over the next few weeks. That became that first Carbon album."

Carbon pursued other avenues in the first half of the 90s as a kind of opuscular take on rock with a line-up that included Marc Sleen on electric and prepared bass, Joseph Trump or David Linton on drums, Zena Perkins on electric harp and keyboards, and David Weisz on sampler. The group continued to push boundaries, operating in a grey zone where they combined rock complexity, improvised detail, electronic morphing and a thrillingly paranoid urban energy.

Around the same time Carbon were winding down, Sharp started up *Templar* to explore his renewed



interest in the blues. "Well, I never went away from it really," he says. "Very often when I was at home at night I'd play a Country blues, or a Charlie Patton song or a Skip James song, because I love that music and have played it since I was a kid. Robert Johnson, you know, all of it. Friends would have a party and ask me to put a blues band together. I like playing that music. It's great to channel that feeling into your hands. And so I figured, why not? Steven Joerg – who was running Homestead at the time – was at some party where I was doing the Terraplane stuff and he said, 'Hey, do you want to make a record?' Sure, why not?"

Sharp says he defines blues as a "mode of expression" rather than a particular form or certain scales, and on an album like *Blues For Next* [2000] he interprets the genre literally as a springboard for flights of Hendrix-like abandon, invention and reinvention. Terraplane recently signed a three-album deal with the German label Intuition – the first release under the deal is slated for autumn. In 2003 the group toured the UK under the auspices of the Contemporary Music Network with Howlin' Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin as special guest. At the London gig, Sumlin would take the spotlight for a couple of numbers and then retire for the next half dozen.

"He's 73 or 74 and he had a mild heart attack and had to have one lung removed," Sharp reveals. "But it's going to take a lot more than that to put Hubert down. You know, he began drinking moonshine and smoking at age six," he chuckles. But the tour must have been hard on him. "We tried to make it not so, give him plenty of time to rest," says Sharp. "He would sleep a lot on the bus. You know, it's hard. He's been doing that all his life. Hubert is really happiest when he's on the road. He also likes hanging out at home with his hedge clippers."

Meanwhile Sharp has continued to explore his algorithmic ideas through his extended ensemble Orchestra Carbon and, increasingly, through a number of other openended groups. Most recently he has refined these ideas in the compositions *Syndakit* and *Radiolaria*. "My musical obsessions now are much more concerned with biological manifestations," he explains. "Syndakit and Radiolaria are all about recombinant musical genetics, you could say. It's about trying to create musical processes, algorithmic structures that are living organisms in a way. Each time the piece is played it has a recognisable characteristic, but in every performance the manifestation is different. I like the idea of using a composition that is just a few lines of code – it's like very elegant computer programming. When I first found out about fractal geometry I was so excited, because it was what I was reading for in terms of a way of analysing how I thought music could and should be. The [Benoit] Mandelbrot book, *The Fractal Geometry Of Nature*, came to me at a time just after I had had my Fibonacci number epiphany and the connection between them was very, very direct. I got to do some gigs where Mandelbrot spoke about his work and got to know him a little bit."

Syndakit has been performed around 20 times including once by the Berlin New Music group Zeitkratzer, who famously transcribed Lou Reed's *Meat Machine* Music and have commissioned a number of Sharp pieces.

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One offshoot of *Syndakit* is the remarkable orchestral work *Cafting*, which was commissioned by the German radio station Hessischer Rundfunk. It's a 30 minute piece with a protracted, dramatic end, which Sharp says he first conceived as one example of a frozen version of *Syndakit*. "It was as if I had been running a computer simulation of it in my inner ear," he continues. "I began to notate it during a residency in Umbria in Italy in 2000 where I was surrounded by natural beauty. This initial version – about 12 minutes' worth – and its backup were both lost in two unrelated hard drive crashes within one week. I put the work aside until the attacks of 9/11. As I sat there seething at what our 'leaders' had conspired to create, I found that my only reasonable outlet to keep from blowing up was to dive back into what I had been hearing in Italy and to regenerate it – although filtered by a new and less utopian outlook."

Sharp says he doesn't want to "get started" on politics but concedes, "I obsess about it and rant about it daily". Yet politics has always coursed – more or less obliquely – through the veins of his music, whether it be in titles like "The Free World" and "Since The Coup", his State Of The Union competitions of minute-long miniatures by various North American outsider musicians, or in the social commentary of his *Yahos* trilogy of collaborations.

In the sleeve-note for his 1992 composition *Infatua*, which he describes as "a series of snapshots, moods and reflections on the uprising" (released on the 1996 Tzadik album *Xenocode*), Sharp states squarely: "Judaism, whether religious, cultural or historical, does not equal Zionism. As one whose family survived the Holocaust, I was made aware of 'our' place in the world and developed a sense of how fanatical nationalism is one of this world's great evils. To see it practised by the Jews of Israel (in a self-defeating escalation of violence) pains me deeply."

"When I gave my introduction at the first festival of Radical Jewish Music at the Knitting Factory people booed," Sharp tells me. "When I said, 'Judaism is not necessarily Zionism', one guy yelled out, 'What is it then? A bowl of fruit?' I know my history pretty well and I have very real criticisms. I see Zionism as a 19th century political movement that arose out of dire needs but took a self-serving and hypocritical turn. It's an emotional issue and you can't discuss these things logically. But I'm glad that John [Zorn] put the piece out because he and I are 180 degrees out of phase about Zionism. I'd recommend everyone read *One Palestine Complete* by Israeli historian Tom Segev. He explores the present-day problems and their sources in the post-Ottoman British occupation."

Over the years Sharp has collaborated with a number of Arabic musicians as a natural extension of his passion for non-Western musics. He has recorded and performed with Master Musicians Of Joujouka leader Bachir Attar, as well as Bedouin six string zither (sumsumia) players Enisat Abu-Kaf and Mohammed Simeh from the Negev desert. After the attacks on the World Trade Center, The Lincoln Center asked Sharp to put a big band together for their focus on Arabic music. The resulting Al Mashreq All-Stars included Attar, Bedouin musicians Muhammad Abu-Ajaj on oud, Musa Al Hajaj vocals and Sultan Abu-Taka. sumsumiya, singer Natacha Atlas, drummers Hamid

Drake and Michael Zerang, Graham Hayes on comet and flugelhorn, OJ Mutumissek, Palestinian multi-instrumentalist Zafer Tawil, and Palestinian oud player and vocalist Marwan Abado.

"It was a great collaboration," enthuses Sharp. "We basically had two days to put together an orchestral concert. I had pieces from each of them, which I arranged for the ensemble, and so each different subgroup would be featured as a soloist and then we had interludes in between that the whole group would play. We got a huge response – a standing ovation."

One of Sharp's many forthcoming projects is an opera he is working on with science fiction writer Jack Womack. "I like his writing and he's a buddy," says Sharp. Both Terraplane and Womack's second novel – part of a New York trilogy that depicts a paranoid vision of the near future in the tradition of William S Burroughs – take their name from the classic Robert Johnson song and Womack also appears reading his own text on Radio Hyper-Yahoo, Sharp's most recent release.

The opera is based on the real-life murder of the night manager at the cafe Bistro on Manhattan's Lower East Side in 1981. The killer was Jack Henry Abbott, the incarcerated author of *In The Belly Of The Beast*, whom Norman Mailer had successfully campaigned to release. Sharp was a regular at the Bistro and often saw Abbott in the area. In fact he had retired to the venue after playing a jazz gig on the night of the murder.

"I saw Abbott come in and sit down with a couple of people and we left," remembers Sharp. "About half an hour later apparently he'd stabbed the night manager over use of the toilet. I mean, there was no toilet at the Bistro. It always seemed like the perfect topic for an opera, since you have to have someone getting killed – preferably stabbed – in an opera. But really it's about the change in the neighbourhood that happened. It was at a cusp point when the neighbourhood began yupifying, before crack had hit – it had been a heroin neighbourhood before that. So the yuppies were coming in, the art galleries were blooming, the whole East Village arts scene. Jack [Womack] was also living down there at that time so he felt very comfortable writing about it."

Womack is not the only science fiction writer Sharp admires. He dedicated an early computer piece to Philip K Dick (PKD on Loop-Loop – just reissued on Arc CD: *Cyberpunk & The Virtual Stance* on Atavistic) and on his most recent visit to London he recorded author Russell Hoban reading from his book, *Ridley Walker*, which he has since turned into a short radio play for WPS3 (www.wps3.org), the Internet radio project for which he is the contemporary music curator.

As one of the great loves of Sharp's life, it's easy to see how science fiction has infused his work with a futuristic bent. He sees a parallel between his music and the once derided literary realm. "The music I do bears the same relationship to real music as science fiction does to real science, or to real writing," he argues. "I like the idea that operating in a realm that isn't considered correct gives you a freedom to try different ideas. I can consider it speculative music in the same way that sci-fi is speculative fiction." □

Hyper-Yahoo is out now on zGaff. Website:

www.elliotsharp.com

EIGHT ESSENTIAL SHARP CDS**CARBON****MONSTER CURVE**

ATONAL/BST 1992

The easiest Carbon material culled from their first three albums originally released on Sharp's own xCAR label between 1984 and 1997. Song structures and instrument tunings are derived from the Fibonacci number series but Sharp also notes the use of "natural waveform series, urban and industrial sounds and textures... circular, looping, interlocked polyrhythms, cyclical and repetitive sequences in the music, and then the added complexity at its heart, with pounding syncopated cross-rhythms by drummers David Linton, Mark E. Miller, Charles K. Noyes and Bobby Pruvitt. Hypnotically circular saxophones riffs recall The Master Musicians Of Jousouka. Sharp's home-made pants, violinoid, tuners and slab are featured alongside the traditional instrumentation.

CARBON**AMUSIA**

ATAVISTIC 1994

Late period Carbon featuring Zsuzsa Perkins (electric harp), Marc Goss (electric and prepared basses), Joseph Trump (drums) and David Wernham (sampler). Exploratory, futuristic take on an expanded rock music.

TERRAPLANE**BLUES FOR NEXT**

KNITTING FACTORY 2000

The second Terraplane album after a six year hiatus was a double. One disc features an instrumental set of new Sharp tunes, the other a series of collaborations with Howlin' Wolf guitarist Hubert Sumlin, and singer-songwriters Dean Bowman and Eric Mungus.

ORCHESTRA CARBON**RADIOLARIA**

ZOAR 2001

Algorithmic work performed by a 13 piece ensemble - featuring nine wind players and a percussionist plus three members electronically processing the ensemble and playing samples of wind instruments - recorded live at Tonic in New York City. A suite of pulsing, syncopated beats and shifting massed chords played with sensitivity and verve.

ELLIOTT SHARP & REINHOLD FRIED**ANOSTALGIA**

GROB 2002

An improv meeting with the leader of Berlin New Music ensemble Zebrastreber. The two instrumentalists explore textural interfaces and chilly atmospheres in a creative and varied sequence of abstract face-offs. Sharp plays electric guitar, computer and soprano saxophone while Fried explores the inside of a piano.

ENSEMBLE MODERN/RADIO-SINFONIE-ORCHESTER FRANKFURT**RACING HEARTS/TESSELLATION ROW/CALLING HS-MEDIA 2003**

Ensemble Modern revisit Tessellation Row, Sharp's hair-raising 1980 composition in Just Intonation for string quartet (it was originally written for The Soldier String Quartet in 1988); and the Radio-Sinfonie-Orchester Frankfurt perform two more recent composed pieces for orchestra, *Calling* at an Edgard Varèse-like major work with the dramatic intensity of the 2001 assault on the World Trade Centre, around which it was composed.

ELLIOTT SHARP**VELOCITY OF HUE**

EMANEM 2003

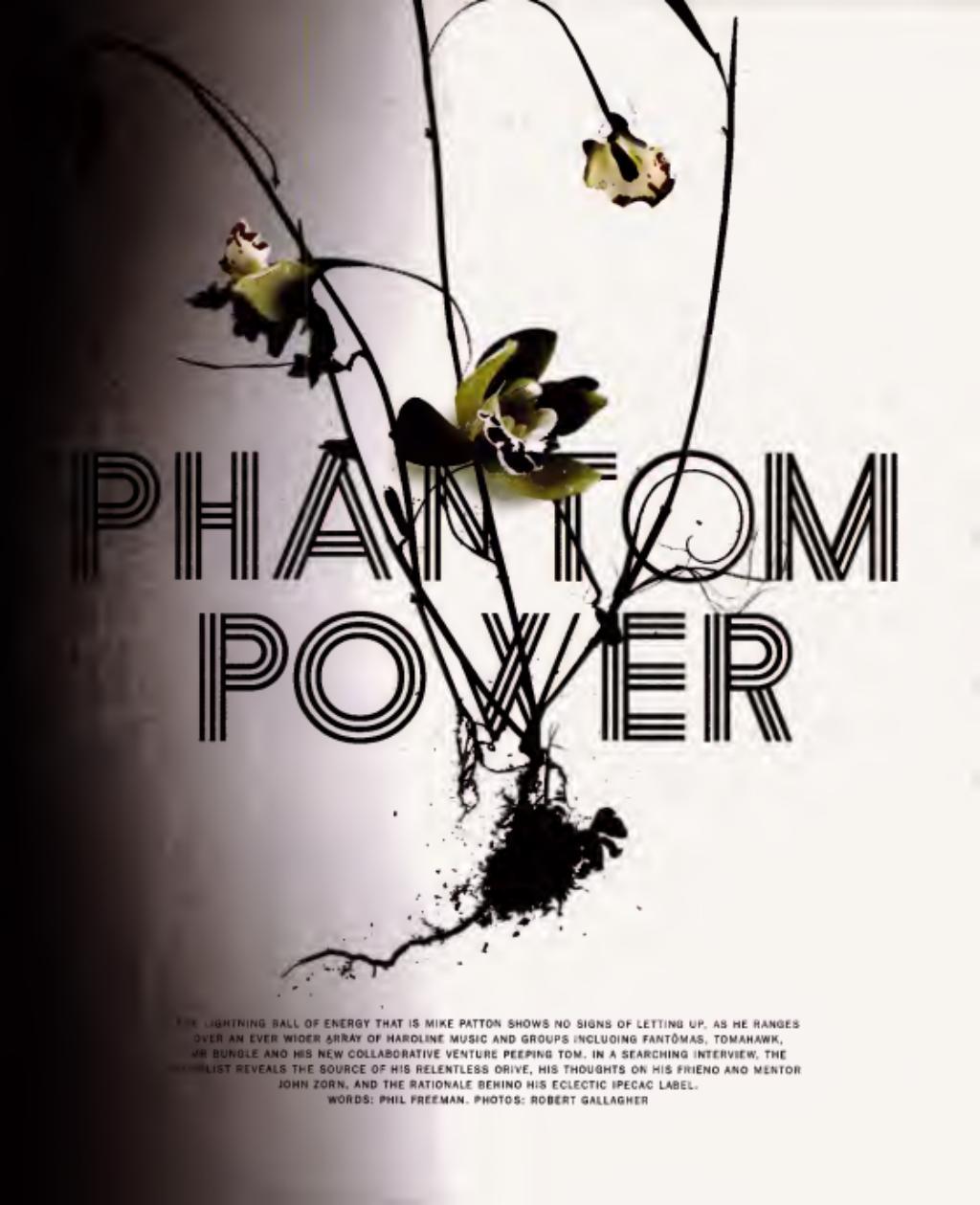
Sharp's first album of acoustic solos on self-modified hyperreal acoustic guitar is something of an oddity for a label that has built its reputation as a stable of Brit Improv. Sharp added a Dobro bridge to enable koto-like note bending, and he adds a little Ebow every now and then for extra sustain. Its mix of Hans Reichel-style guitar extensions, blues, far Eastern influences and Sharp's famous interlocking hammer-on patterning rightly won Sharp praise.

ELLIOTT SHARP**RADIO HYPER-YAHOO**

ZOAR 2004

Third in Sharp's "pop and social commentary" *Yahoos* series. This one comprises collaborations with writers and performers including actor Steve Buscemi (reading Willem B. Burroughs), Jack Womack, Eric Bogosian, Tracey Morris, Edwin Turner, Maggie Estep, Lee Lovell and Easter Barket. Varied, assured and with a biting sense of humour. □





PHANTOM POWER

THE LIGHTNING BALL OF ENERGY THAT IS MIKE PATTON SHOWS NO SIGNS OF LETTING UP. AS HE RANGES OVER AN EVER WIDER ARRAY OF HARDCORE MUSIC AND GROUPS INCLUDING FANTÔMAS, TOMAHAWK, MR BUNGLE AND HIS NEW COLLABORATIVE VENTURE PEERING TDM, IN A SEARCHING INTERVIEW, THE LIST REVEALS THE SOURCE OF HIS RELENTLESS DRIVE, HIS THOUGHTS ON HIS FRIEND AND MENTOR JOHN ZORN, AND THE RATIONALE BEHIND HIS ECLECTIC IPECAC LABEL.

WORDS: PHIL FREEMAN. PHOTOS: ROBERT GALLAGHER

"I go up to Victoriaville, or any other jazz festival, any place where minds are supposed to be as open as they get, and we come out there with one loud guitar, one note and ears turn off. 'It's Heavy Metal.' I exist – and my music exists – in a place where it can be snubbed equally by anyone. And God bless it for that." Mike Patton is accustomed to, even genial about, being misunderstood, shrugged off and disdained. As long as he's been in the public eye, he's expressed himself through an array of projects, never giving any hints as to which, if any, is the closest to his heart. In the mid-1990s, he toured arenas worldwide, singing for the funk Metal group Faith No More. At the same time, his spin-off group Mr Bungle was passing off curious listeners with three wilfully obnoxious albums, each one a collision of genres fuelled by a savage need to shock and distress the unwary, and to make Patton and his buddies laugh. Eventually, Faith No More and Mr Bungle both disbanded or went on hiatus, but Patton didn't settle down – the opposite, in fact. He's spent the last half-decade nursing himself in so many directions, it's difficult to believe he sleeps. He's amassed an arm-long list of credits, collaborating with everyone from John Zorn and Merzbow to Dan The Automator and The Ecuteoners. His vocals have seasoned diverse releases including Björk's *Medúlla*, and *White People*, the latest by Prince Paul's *Handsome Boy Modeling School* album. He's also back to fronting two groups. One, *Tomahawk*, is the closest he's currently got to a mainstream rock project. His bandmates include ex-members of Helmet and The Jesus Lizard and the group has released two albums on Patton's label Ipecac. The other is Fantomas, an underground all-star quartet featuring members of Mr Bungle, The Melvins and Slayer. They've released four albums since 1998, each one an attempt to break the boundaries of Metal. Fantomas sculpt intense, ambitious music that demands focused listening even as it encourages demented moshing – a combination, a dichotomy, that encapsulates Patton's entire oeuvre.

Born in Arcata, California ("Behind the redwood curtain," as he puts it) to a teacher and a social worker, Patton – who now resides in San Francisco – describes a restless childhood. "It's very easy to get lost, growing up in small towns like that," he says. "You develop a certain nervous energy that sticks with you your whole life and you're always itching to get the hell out of wherever you are. I still have that, even though I'm happy in San Francisco. Maybe that's why I tour a lot, I'm not sure." It's probably got something to do with his leaps from project to project, too. Patton is a highly focused creature of the studio – or the bedroom. He's a pure autodidact, who taught himself the rudiments of multiple instruments, while learning all about production and orchestration from his massive record collection. Like Jim "Fetus" Thrivell, he takes time to figure out how to accomplish the sonic task he's labouring over at any given moment. He describes his studio style as "punch it in till you get it right. Nobody's looking." When an idea strikes him, he slaps together a demo tape, then goes hunting for musicians capable of realising it more expertly than he can.

This is also the method employed by Tom Waits, Frank Zappa and Brian Wilson – Californians all. Drawing lines between Patton and Zappa may seem obvious or even intellectually lazy. Mr Bungle's frenetic leaps from disco-funk to free jazz to Metal, often within the space of a single verse of one song, clearly mirrors similarly hyper-caffeinated work by The Mothers Of Invention. But they don't have that much in common really – and, to be honest, Patton's discography might be shallower, but its breadth and

the relative absence of smugness make it the greater achievement. Both men – like Waits, Wilson and Harry Partch – are exemplars of California Pop Art (musical department). Patton's willingness to work in any style of music, especially ones he's unfamiliar with, is reminiscent of Zappa's parodic takes on disco, punk and doo-wop; Waits's adaptation of beatnik and hobo personae; and Partch's transformation of hobo graffiti into modern classical music. This sort of wide-ranging cultural appropriation has long been a hallmark of Californian art, whether it be the gas station paintings of Ed Ruscha, the recontextualised Gumby drawings of Raymond Pettibon or the hot rod graphics gone psychiatric and hostile that make up the foundation of Robert Williams's vein-bursting canvases.

For the past 15 years, Patton has enjoyed a close and creative partnership with the decidedly non-Californian composer and performer John Zorn. He introduced himself to the saxophonist at a gig in 1990, offering a Mr Bungle demo tape and a request for Zorn to produce the group's first album. Since then, Patton has established himself among Zorn's vast array of collaborating musicians, appearing on many of his albums and releasing two discs of his own on Zorn's label Tzadik (1997's *Futurism-inspired Pranzo* *Ottanzalate* and 1999's *Adult Themes For Voice*). The two men even have a continuing group together: the electronics/sax/vocals improv the Hemophilic with Iue Mon. Under that banner, they've released a limited edition two CD set and a live CD from one of Zorn's recent 50th birthday gigs at New York's Tonic. The Hemophilic project has taught Patton an important lesson – that aggression is fine, but it's not necessarily a panacea. "Zorn and I felt it was really important, that – we have a great language, we play duo all the time but it's much deeper and more intense to have Iue there," he explains. "There really is a difference in approach from the female improvisers that I've played with and the males. And over time, Iue taught me that it isn't always about attack, attack, attack. What that meant to me in Faith No More... I don't think I knew it then. I was a teenager. I think by our second record, I had it figured out, that there's a world out there and there's a whole lot of other ways to approach what you do."

Faith No More had a minor hit with a cover of The Commodores' glutinous ballad "Easy", and many Patton listeners have marvelled at the affection for lounge exotic and other seemingly edgeless musical forms that's manifested itself on the *Lovage* album *Music To Make Love To Your Old Lady By* (with Dan The Automator), and *Romances*, an experimental album made with Norway's John Kaada. He's got an answer for them. "In a weird way, by listening to it, I'm studying it. How is this arranged? Especially with exocba stuff. The orchestration in that music is so dense and so complex and so amazing, if you can get beyond the kitsch. And I can do that in 30 seconds flat. With Les Baxter in particular, the orchestral density of what that guy accomplished never ceases to amaze me. I hear new stuff in there every time I listen."

Zorn, with whom Patton has gone on massive record-buying trips to Japan, has clearly been a crucial figure in his life – a good friend and musical mentor. "He was probably the first person that I'd improvised with," Patton explains, recalling early sax/vocal duos the two performed at the Knitting Factory and other venues. "No safety net. Naked on stage, where it all could and would end and should have gone wrong. What you do is, you listen and interact and hopefully develop a language. One of the many things he taught me was that it can happen. And it can happen with a total stranger. It can happen with someone who's 30



years older than you, or with a small child, but developing that telepathy is special when it does happen." Working with Zorn, whose command of the saxophone is pretty much absolute, seems to have inspired Patton to develop his vocal range and technique. Though he's self-taught in this as in other things, the need to keep up with a pernicious and lightning-fast duo partner has forced Patton to create a palette of guttural sounds, shrikes and gabbles that *The Boredoms*' Eye might well envy. And the partnership is a two-way street. Zorn is clearly enthused by the singer's boundless energy and aggression. Naked City's most punishing album, the ultra-heavy single track *Leng T'che*, features thanks to Patton and The Melvins, presumably for inspiration, in the booklet.

Patton recently took his unique vocalisations to a reworking of Naked City's track "Grand Guignol", which has just appeared in the group's *Complete Studio Recordings* box set. "I said he always intended to it to be a piece with a vocal. Actually, with lots of vocals. He described it as a concerto for voice," Patton recalls. "And I think originally he wanted Diamanda (Galas) to do it, and something happened and she didn't do it, but he said, 'Hey, this is the way I always intended it and I want you to do it.' He did give me a little bit of direction, but for the most part he said, do whatever the hell you want." Surprisingly, Patton's first version was too nuanced and subtle for Zorn. "Usually, when I'd work with him and with Naked City, it was about space and contrast. You couldn't put vocals in every section, that's the least dynamic thing you could do. So knowing the way he works, and how from past experience he'd put vocals in every other section, and I'd lay out for a while, whatever, the way I mixed it was very background. He sent it back and said, 'No, no, no, no, no. This sounds great, but [give me] more.' He really wanted a blasting – in certain sections, it's just me, like a soloist."

Zorn has had no involvement to date with Patton's highest-profile project, *Fantomas*. The group, named after a French detective from an early 20th century series of novels and concurrent films (and later a Mexican comic book hero), is an avant Metal dream team. Buzz Osborne of The Melvins plays guitar; Trevor Dunn, formerly of Mr Bungle, is the bassist; and behind the drum kit sits Dave Lombardo, best known for his work with Metal masters Slayer but also the engine behind numerous side projects, including his recent Drums Of Death collaboration with DJ Spooky, and a few Zorn albums (*Taboo And Evil*, *Children's Music*). "It was like writing down a Christmas list, and it wasn't a very deep one," says Patton. "I got all my first choices. I didn't know how they would respond to it. I knew Buzz, but not that well. Trevor was really my only sure thing, he was like the security blanket, meaning if it all went belly-up, I could cry on his shoulder." Lombardo is Patton's ace in the hole – and he knows it. "I saw Slayer a little while ago with Dave, and I'd seen them when I was a teenager of course, and loved it to death," Patton recalls. "But seeing them again, and seeing how effortless that music is to him – I thought I even saw him yawn a couple of times, while bashing his brains out and driving that band." With *Fantomas*, Lombardo gets to play much more than just the Death Metal blast beats he helped invent. He welcomes the challenge, according to Patton. "Over the years, I always thought he was great, but playing with him, and making him jump through every hoop imaginable and watching him do it – he's wide-eyed. Any bizarre suggestion or anything that might be unfamiliar to him – 'Yeah, sure, why not? Let's try it! This is great!' He's

just so excited about this stuff that it's energising and empowering."

Having a supportive group is crucial (in a 'consent of the governed' sort of way). *Fantomas* is anything but a democracy. Sure, Patton was assembling a bunch of guys he wanted to make music with, but rather than waiting to see what came out of that creative confluence, he brought them together to perform a specific set of tunes, in a very particular way. "Like I do with nearly everything I write, I basically made a rough recording of myself playing all the instruments, which can be very comical. When you're starting a band, it's like a chemical experiment. You don't know how bands are gonna respond, especially to music that's as angular and abstract as *Fantomas* is. I didn't know how Lombardo was gonna hear this. I had no idea." All four of their releases to date have been recorded in the same way: "I write down everything, put it on a tape, and say, 'That's it. Play it.' And you know, a lot of it's hard to decipher, so I'll have to sit down with Buzz or Dave and show them exactly what I want, and if there's a part that comes along – well, I'm open to suggestion, let's put it that way. But that music is, more so than any of my other groups, about precision and execution. There is a right and a wrong way of playing it. And I really feel like my role is to illustrate very clearly what to do and what not to do."

The group's self-titled debut from 1999 mimicked a comic book in its structure. It was labelled Book 1, and featured 30 tracks, each named for a page and lasting a number of frames, or panels, of action. The only track that didn't follow this pattern was number 13, which was two seconds of run-off from track 12. Patton explains, "I've always been curious about what you can and can't do when indexing tracks on a CD. I wondered if you could skip one. You can't. If you notice, on the CDs, track 13 appears. It goes for one and a half seconds, which is the bare minimum that it can be, and I indexed it at the end of 12 so you barely notice it. But it does appear, for one and a half seconds. I never really got rid of it. And initially, I just thought I wanted to have an *asynchronicity* thing on the *Fantomas* records, and I want to keep it that way every time. I chose 13 for obvious bad luck and protection reasons, and wanted to keep doing it throughout all of our records. But after (2004's) *Delirium Cordia*, I realised I'd broken the mould, so fuck it."

That *Fantomas* debut, which was also the inaugural release from Patton's Ipecac label, set the mould for the group's future albums. The music has all the precision of Prog rock, but it's as compressed as Grindcore. The longest piece is just over four minutes, the shortest just under 30 seconds. Each track features multiple riffs, which rarely repeat, and there are no solos. During the slower moments, guitarists Osborne's fetish for heftiness in its own regard comes to the fore, as the group burrow into a post-Sabbath branch before launching itself over the top, into another high-speed assault. Patton, for his part, refuses to seize the foreground. His voice is clearly present but it's in the middle of the mix, just one more instrument, and there are no lyrics, only shouted interjections, sobs, roars and babble. This was a strategy devised in part (as might be expected) from Yamatka Eye's work with Naked City, but equally from John Tardy's gravel-gargling work on *Slowly We Rot*, the 1989 debut CD from Florida sludge-Metal unit Obituary, (Tardy, not wanting to have his group pigeonholed alongside the knuckle-dragging sadists of the nascent Death Metal scene, chose not to print lyrics for their songs inside the album. What he was singing was indecipherable. Rather than form words, he howled like a despairing ape, or ranted

incomprehensibly like the lunatic nobody wants to sit next to on the bus.)

"Believe it or not, you totally nailed it," Patton laughs, when I mention Obituary. "When I – how old was I? I was probably 18 or 19 when that record came out. I thought the guy was a fucking genius, because there were no words. There were certain little phrases, like 'wuuuuh' and 'saaaaah', and that really hit me at the time. I realised he was using the voice as an instrument within a song form. Especially with that form of music, that is genius, because no one knows. There's nothing to say anyway. It's a sound. Better than that when hearing him talk about disembowelling some virgin. Since a lot of it comes from small towns or suburbs, it's really a great undiscovered American folk music, Death Metal."

The second *Fantomas* album, *The Director's Cut* (2001), was a little lighter in spirit than the debut. A collection of 15 moody themes reinterpreted in thrashy fashion, on first listen it feels more of a task than its predecessor, possibly because all-cover projects (even when thematically unified) are frequently the last resort of the uninspired. But Patton, through *Fantomas*, is actually on to something with *The Director's Cut*. Movie scores, even heard without their accompanying visuals, are frequently more dramatic than music originally intended to stand alone. Patton's interpretations of these pieces, which mostly start out a little on the sedate side before becoming the squalling outbursts *Fantomas* fans expect, retain the innate drama of scores, while compressing the music into dense armour-piercing bolts of sound. As on the debut, track lengths run between one and four minutes, and the whole disc contains only 42 minutes of music.

Despite the thematic connections to comic books and movies made explicit on the first two discs, *Fantomas* have never made a video, nor even included any visual accompaniments to the music on their CDs. Patton seems to view this as practically a charitable gesture on his part. "I think the music is complicated enough," he says. "There's enough information in there – you wouldn't need any more stimuli with this music, in my opinion. It's already borderline overkill. That's why we make short records, that's why there are no lyrics, no proper words – you can only handle so much information and at a certain point you ear just shut down. At least mine do."

The group's third release, *Delirium Cordia*, makes this point explicit. It really isn't the kind of thing one hauls off the shelf on a daily basis. A 75 minute work, it's composed of dozens of sections but programmed as a single epic track. The music is punctuated by sounds evocative of the operating table – beeps, mechanical respiration and the subdued, businesslike conversational tones of expert surgeons. It's rough going, shifting from thrash to Dark Ambient interludes to jazz-like chording and back through all those sounds and more, for just under an hour, followed by 15 minutes of a needle gently scraping a record's runout groove. Chords moan softly, guitars ring out, huge guitar riffs hit like slabs of concrete falling from the sky.

"I wanted to force people to listen to it as one piece of music," says Patton. "Unless you were swallowing it as one giant pill, it would never have the same effect. And in that regard, it was much more like contemporary classical music. They weren't songs. They weren't pieces. They weren't frames. They weren't little cells of music. I wanted it to really come off as a monolithic, larger than life experience, like sitting on the operating table or anything else. I wanted it to be long, drawn out and painful."

The recording process might have been nearly as agonising as the listening experience. "It had a zillion parts, and there were only certain sections where I



knew what the final arrangement was going to be," Patton recalls. "And I kind of kept them in the dark about it. I said, 'Don't worry about it, you'll hear it in the end and let's just do this' — I don't know, it was divided into maybe 50-something parts, some of which were band pieces but a lot of them weren't. Most of them were overdubs on top of things that I'd done at home. I didn't want it to sound like a rock band, I didn't want it to sound like us. I wanted it to sound like a contemporary music ensemble. So we basically remixed a bunch of instruments. I had Dave playing mostly gongs and orchestral percussion."

The brand new *Fantomas* disc, *Suspended Animation*, couldn't be more different from its predecessor. A collection of 30 staccato noise-bursts, one for each day in the month of April, it is packaged with a lavish calendar/booklet, illustrated by Japanese artist Yoshitomo Nara, and the sounds are even more bizarre and compelling than the packaging. It's a sort of second cousin to Naked City's infamous 1988 *trash jazz* collage, *Torture Garden*, except that where the Zom disc circulated through every style of music under the sun, *Suspended Animation* mostly vacillates between furious Grindcore and the swoops, squiggles and sprongs of cartoon music. In addition to Patton's hyperactive vocals, samples from children's *Speek & Spell* toys are heard, spelling out the word *Fantomas* and telling the listener to sing a song, or play again. It even ends with the sampled voice of Bugs Bunny, from the toon classic *What's Opera, Doc?* The range of influences, from Spike Jones to Napalm Death, and the way they've been totally subsumed into Mike Patton's vision, is almost panic-inducing. It's impossible to hear everything *Fantomas* are doing with one listen. As he says himself, even their more lighthearted moments (and he claims *Suspended Animation* is "our Romper Room-style, caffeinated children's record") teeter on the brink of sonic overlaid. Like Grindcore maniacs Agoraphobic Nosebleed, who pack their 45-second songs with answering machine messages, blasting drum machines, sampled rants from cult horror movies and unearthly screeches, *Fantomas* attack from all sides at once, with the precision of a sharpshooter on crystal meth. The mind-boggling discipline required to execute their manoeuvres is just one more thing that sets them apart from any other musical unit around. All the more so, when one reflects that *Delirium Corda* and *Suspended Animation* were recorded in the same block of sessions. "We were bouncing back and forth, depending on what instruments were around or what people were around, the entire time," Patton says. "We'd do a cartoonish band piece for the newest record, then ten minutes later we'd be working on a drone for the *Delirium* record. The only record I really had mapped out was *Delirium*, and I knew I'd have a little time to work out the specifics of the children's record."

It would be journalistically convenient, at this point, to attempt some kind of rationalisation — say, that the emergence of *Fantomas* as a 'real group' (with tours, back catalogues, etc) was what inspired Patton to strike out on a new project that could hardly be more different from *Fantomas*, by hooking up with some of the US's most dexterous turntable artists: Rob Swift, Roc Raida and Total Eclipse, collectively known as The X-ecutioners. But there's really no longer explanation for the existence of this year's *General Patton Vs The X-ecutioners* than the Occam's razor one: it was what he felt like doing. "This was something I'd been thinking about for five or six years," he says. "I knew I wanted to make a record with turntables only, and preferably a crew of a few guys. It took a while to figure out who would be up for this kind of venture. I talked

to Q-Bert [DJ with *Invisibl Skratch Pilz*], I did a few gigs with some other people here in San Francisco, all of which was great. Then, a couple of years later, I played some live gigs with The X-ecutioners and man, they were up for anything. Absolutely loose, voracious, they had no idea what I was gonna do — I don't think they knew if I was gonna be singing songs, or lyrics or anything, they just said, 'Let's just hit.' And they busted my chops, and were listening, and we really had a nice connection, I felt. We did a few more gigs, and I decided, these are the guys."

The move shouldn't shock anyone who's been following Patton's career over the years. From Faith No More's collaboration with Samoan gangsta rappers Boo-Ya Tribe to David Shear's work on the first Mr Bungle album, turntables have been a frequent presence in his work. The disc, though, is a surprise. It's almost totally free of the masturbatory wiggle-waggle antics that show up on so many scratch records. Part of this is due to The X-ecutioners, of course, who've always been more interested in layered rhythms than noise-busting antics. But Patton's vision was a subtle one too. "I've always been fascinated with the speed with which the turntable can execute," he explains. "It's an incredibly powerful instrument, and most of the time it's used for macho acrobatic displays, and contests. Turntables are used in a really sporting way, and I kinda wanted to use them musically, show them off and really explore the power of them, because I think the speed with which you can change, literally as fast as you can drop a needle is how fast you can move with these things. To me, it's like having the ultimate band behind you. It's like having a million bands behind you. Although it has confrontational, soundclash elements, the ultimate goal was to integrate." Integrate he does — his voice is only discernible on perhaps half a dozen of the album's 23 tracks. On all the others, he might be there, but he's filtered through effects or otherwise relegated to the background. This is deliberate — Patton wanted to make his voice sound like another turntable for much of the disc.

His next project (as should be obvious at this point, there's always a next project) is a solo album, to be released on Ipecac under the name Peeping Tom. For some reason neither Patton nor I can fathom, this is the project of his that seems to have fans most excited. He's been working on it, off and on, for a few years now; maybe that's the reason for the fascination on Internet message boards. Based on his description, though, it's hard not to imagine widespread confusion, if not dislaunderment, greeting the eventual product. "It's an exercise," he says. "Can I real all these impuses in for a three-minute song? And it's proven to be quite a challenge. Verses, choruses, a couple of departure points and wrap it all up in a bow. I'm having a fuckin' blast doing it. Does that mean it's going to get on the radio? Hell, no!"

"Instead of putting a band together for it," he continues, "I decided to play everything myself, because it's not too technically virtuosic, let's say, and I decided to do it with different producers. I did hire a few different musicians, and there are a few guest vocalists and whatnot, but for the most part it's me collaborating with different producers, which I've never really done. Amon Tobin is doing some stuff with me, some of the guys from CLQUOQEAO on the Anticon label, Dan The Automator's doing a few — who else? Muggs from Cypress Hill, Richard Devine... It's a beat-driven record for sure. But by the same token, there's a ballad thing or two, there's choir stuff, there's string sections, I'm doing a duet with Bebel Gilberto on a Brazilian tune — it gets all over the place. But it has elements of what I hear to be pop and have heard to be pop." Clearly, dependent as it is

on technological advances and the aesthetics that have come with them, this is an album that couldn't have been made a decade ago. But there are decided pitfalls to that approach. "Sending files back and forth through the mail, there's an incredible margin for error," says Patton. "It's not the impersonal part that bothers me, but it's hard to describe the way you want things to sound in a fucking email, or even over the telephone. The one good thing is, with all the time that's elapsed, I've got over 30 pieces, which is enough for two records. So that's the bright side."

Patton's flexibility and relentless creativity are unique in contemporary music, rock or otherwise. What's fascinating is that he's managed to retain a fanbase while pursuing so many seemingly oppositional and quixotic projects. Of course, that fanbase isn't necessarily one many artists would choose. A visit to Ipecac's online message board reveals a disturbingly high number of people who seem to view the ability to offend passers-by with one's musical selections as prima facie evidence of intellectual superiority. Patton takes it all in his stride, though. "I learned long ago that there's absolutely no control I have over it," he says. "They're like relatives out there — you can't choose 'em. A lot of people assume that if I'm doing something that isn't 'fuck you' from top to bottom, then I've lost my edge, or there's nothing interesting about what I'm doing anymore." He's somewhat obligated to be forgiving of his fans, since by his own admission, he's only recently begun to outgrow his own fuckhead phase. "When I was younger, we would put ourselves in compromising positions," he recalls. "Like opening for Billy Idol or Robert Plant, when conventional wisdom would say, 'What? Are you gonna sell any more records? Are you gonna make a lot of money? No, there's nothing good that's gonna come out of it.' We did get off on being in those positions. And it does teach you some sort of miltant kind of endurance, when whiskey bottles are flying past your head and 50,000 people are boozing you. I've been in that situation with lots of bands, and it's been uplifting in a strange sort of teenage way. It's us versus them, and fuck 'em if they can't take a joke. But as you get older — although I'm sure I'll be in more positive like that — that becomes less and less what it's about for me. Like I say, my music these days is problematic enough. It's hard enough just to get it played right. The rest of it becomes less and less important. You've gotta tune out the bullshit, and the bullshit outweighs what's going on, it's time to pull the plug and move on."

So who knows? Maybe Mike Patton's fans will not only continue to follow him, but even catch up with him one of these days. Whether the larger music world will ever fully come to grips with his achievement is less predictable. But he's so used to being on the outside, he probably wouldn't come in if he was invited. "I've come to a point in my life where I've realised that nothing I do is going to be straight or pure or fit in a specific genre or even be well-liked by the masses," Patton concludes. "I know it's always going to have a freakish hybrid or some weird fingerprint on it, and it's beyond my control and I've completely accepted it and am very comfortable with it now. In a sense, that's why I started my own record label, I'm moving forward and trying my best to create my own little world, because I know that no matter how hard I try, that's the only way for me. I'm a lifer, and people, no matter what they say or do, can only change so much. You gotta accept who you are." □

General Patton Vs The X-ecutioners and *Fantomas*'s *Suspended Animation* are out this month on Ipecac. Naked City: The Complete Studio Recordings is out now on zadik.com.



The Primer

A BI-MONTHLY GUIDE TO THE CORE RECORDINGS
OF A PARTICULAR ARTIST OR GENRE

GRIME



THIS MONTH: SIMON REYNOLDS SCRUBS AWAY THE RESIDUE OF TWO-STEP AND GARAGE CROSSOVER TO REVEAL GRIME, THE BUSTLING AND HIGHLY COMPETITIVE UK MICROCULTURE OF PRODUCERS AND MC'S WHOSE RAPPING OVER CHEAP 'N' NASTY SYNTH-FUELLED RIDDIMS HAS EXTENDED GRIME'S REACH FROM PIRATE RADIO TO THE TOP 20.

ILLUSTRATION: SAVAGE PENCIL



Grime emerged from London's pirate radio

underground. Its immediate precursor was two-step (aka UK Garage), which at the turn of the millennium was making a powerful breakthrough into the UK pop mainstream. Two-step had been shaped by the so-called 'feminine pressure' for singalong melodies and wend-your-wrist grooviness. Grime arose as a backlash against this crossover sound, a violent swing in the scene's inner gender-pendulum from yin to yang. But went two-step's high-pitched diva vocals, sensual swing and sexed-up amorousness; in came gruff rapping, stiff electro-influenced beats and raucous aggression.

MCs have been part of the pirate radio tradition for at least 15 years, going back through Garage and Jungle to the early days of *Housecore* rave. By the end of the 90s, however, the MCs were moving beyond their customary restricted role as party 'hosts' and sidekicks to the DJ. Instead of gimmicky vocal lyrics and praise-the-selector exhortations, they began to rap actual verses – initially, extended toasts on traditional boasts about their own mic skills, but soon getting into narrative, complicated metaphors and rhyme schemes, vicious dissing of rivals and even introspective soliloquies. The MC's rise swiftly eclipsed the DJ, hitherto the most prominent figura on rave flyers or the main designated artist on record releases. 2001 was the turning point, when MCs shunted selectors out of the spotlight. So Solid Crew broke into the pop charts and the underground seethed with similar collectives modelled on the clan/dynasty structures that prevail in American Hip-hop and Jamaican dancehall.

Emerging from the transitional sound known as 'Garage rap', Grime really defined itself as a distinct genre when the first tracks appeared that were designed purely as MC tools – riddims for rappers to ride. These Grime instrumental were largely sourced in the electro diaspora – post-'String Teng' regga, Miami Bass, New Orleans bounce, Dirty South trunk and street rap produced like Swiss Beats. Like these genres, Grime doesn't go in much for sampling but prefers synths, typically with cheap 'n' nasty timbres that vaguely evoke the 80s and often seem to be influenced by pulp movie video soundtracks, videogame muzak and even mobile phone ringtones. But in Grime's textured beats and complex programming you can also hear the imprint of the Jungle that most of these late teens/early tweedies producers grew up on, alongside folksy memory lane of Gabba and Techno. Sometimes you might imagine you can hear ancient echoes of post-punk era electro-primitivists such as The Normal, DAF, Cabaret Voltaire, or the calligraphic exquisiteness of Japan, Thomas Leer and The Residents.

Inherited from the period when two-step ruled the Top Ten, but also inspired by eminently watching the living-large of American rap superstars, Grime feels a powerful drive to invade the mainstream and get 'paid in full'. Pirate radio, a broadcast medium with a potentially vast audience, encourages this grandiosity. One peculiar byproduct of Grime's ambition is the scene's craze for DVD releases, like *Risky Roadz* and *Lord Of The MCs*, containing documentary material with live footage. It's as if the scene is DIYing the sort of TV coverage it feels it deserves but isn't getting. Yet while some top MCs are being groomed for stardom by major-owned boutique labels, the day to day reality of Grime is grafting to get by in a narrowcast culture. Selling 500 copies of a track is considered a good result. The way Grime operates – small-run vinyl-only pressings and mixtapes, often sold directly to

specialist stores – has a surprising amount in common with other musical micro-cultures. Grime is what Reff's Chris Cutler would call an 'engaged' culture, with a high ratio of performers to consumers. These aspiring MCs, DJs and producers have a deeper understanding of what constitutes skill and innovation in their scene. Grime even has an improvised element, with its freestyles and MC battles. There's a glorious ephemerality to the way MCs riff off-the-cuff lyrics during pirate sessions, although fans have always recorded the shows and some are now getting archived on the Web.

Unlike those globally dispersed micro-cultures such as noise or extreme Metal, Grime is geographically concentrated. It's popular across London and has outposts in other UK cities, but its absolute heartland consists of a few square miles in that part of East London not served by the Tube. In truth, it's a parochial scene, obsessed with a sense of place, riven by intermeine conflicts and territorial rivalries (the intense competitiveness is one reason Grime's so creative). Still, despite this insularity, Grime has never been easier for 'outsiders' to investigate, thanks to *1xtra* (the BBC's digital radio station for UK 'Urban' music, www.bbc.co.uk/1xtra/garage/; check especially the weekly shows by Cameo and Richie Vibe Vee), the trend for pirates like *Rescue FM* to go online as well as broadcast terrestrially, mail order via companies like Rhythm Division (www.rhythmdivision.co.uk/home.asp) and *Independence-records.co.uk/ug.htm*), and the swarm of blogs covering the scene.

SO SOLID CREW DILEMMA

SO SOLID 12" 1999

OXIDE & NEUTRINO

BOUND 4 DA RELOAD (CASUALTY)

EXIST WEST 12" 2000

So Solid are famous as the first MC crew to cross over big time (they hit number one with "21 Seconds"), and infamous for their frequent brushes with the law. In Grime terms, though, their single most influential track is this instrumental, which replaced two-step's subby swing with an electro-derived coldness and rigour. This new starkness was a timely move given that two-step had reached the inevitable 'over-rap' phase that affects all dance genres, its beats becoming cluttered and fussy. With its hard-edged drum machine snare and single-note sustained bassdrone veering upward in pitch, "Dilemma" rediscovered the Kraftwerk principle: inflexibility can sometimes be funnier than suppleness. So solid, indeed. "Dilemma" is the back of a block in the middle of the dancefloor, a real vibe-chiller.

So Solid affiliates DJ Daide and MC Neutrino also scored a number one UK hit with "Bound 4 Da Reload", initially a pirate radio anthem in 1998, "Reload" created a massive rift in the Garage scene. Dider types loathed it, young 'uns loved it. Today's Grime heads would probably disown their teenage favourite as a novelty track. Which it certainly was, from the *Casualty* TV theme sample to the "can everyone stop getting shot?" soundbite from the UK gangster film *Lock, Stock And Two Smoking Barrels*. Gimmicks aside, Oxide's production is heavy, from the ice-stab pizzicato violins (strings of death; perhaps, given the track's allusions to the rising blood-tide of violence on London's streets) to the doom-boom of sub-bass to the morgue-chilly echo swathing much of the record. Probably equally responsible to two-step fans was the nagging, nasal insistence of Neutrino's

rappling, which is remorselessly unmelodic but horribly catchy. Instantly transforming two-step from 'the sound of now' to its current nostalgic might status as *Did Skool*, "Reload" has strong claims to being the first Grime tune.

PAY AS U GO KARTEL

KNOW WE

SOUL CITY 12" 1999

WILEY & ROLL DEEP

TERRIBLE

SOUL CITY 12" 2000

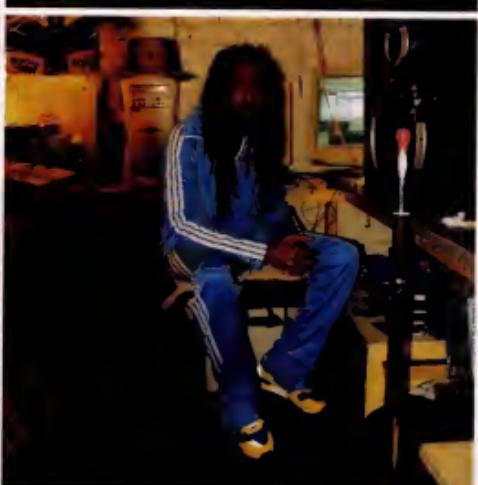
Circulating on dubplate as early as 1999, "Know We" was in constant pirate rotation by the time of its 2001 release, alongside "Terrible". Both are back-to-basics affairs: simple programmed beats, in each case adorned with the soliloquy of a violin flourish, functioning purely as a vehicle for the MCs. Another striking shared characteristic is the use of the first person plural. Each MC bugs up himself when it's time on the mic, but at the chorus individualism is subsumed in a collective thrust for prestige. "Now we're going on temple," promise/threaten Roll Deep, and they don't mean they're about to give a weak performance – 'roll deep' itself meaning marching around town as a mob. But there's a hint of precociousness to Pay As U Go's assertion of universal renown. The sense of grandeur is latent; they're not stars yet. What does come through loud and clear on both tracks is the hunger. "Terrible" starts with a Puff Daddy soundbite: "Sometimes I don't think you motherfuckers understand where I'm coming from, where I'm trying to get to." Both the PAUG and Roll Deep tracks were produced by a young prodigy named Wiley, whose catchphrase back then was, "They call me Willyam/I'm gonna make a million." Roll Deep are Grime's NWA (and its ranks have included such luminaries as Dizzee Rascal, Riko, Row Den, Trim and Danny Weed), with Wiley as its Dr Dre, if he's yet to make that first million, this human dynamo must surely have released close to that number of tracks these last four years.

GENIUS CRU COURSE BRUV

KRONIK 12" 2001

The gangsta rap companion isn't an idle one. PAUG and Roll Deep pioneered criminal-minded lyrics. Taking them literally isn't always advisable, as the imagery of 'slewing' and 'merkery' is often purely metaphorical, signifying the destruction of rival MCs in verbal combat, the maiming of egos rather than bodies. Still, the genre won't always be relentlessly hostile. Just before the Grime era, Garage rap outfits like Heartless Crew and Genius Cru enjoyed playful bonhomie. The follow-up to their number 12 pop hit "Boom Selection", Genius's "Course Bruv", talks about spreading "muff love" in the club and stresses that they "still don't wanna hurt nobody". The chorus even celebrates the never-ea muh of sharing your soft drinks with complete strangers, the "course bruv" being Genius's gracious acquiescence to "can I have a sip of that?" Producer Capone weaves an effervescent merry-go-round groove of chiming bass melody and giddy looped strings, while the MCs hypnotise with the sheer bubbling fluidity of their chat. The verses are deliberately preposterous play-fightish fun: "Number one breadwinner" Kellion claims he's "invested in many shares, many many stocks" while Fizzy purports to date "beb chicks", "batemmas" and even have "hot chicks as my household cleaners".

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT:
KANO, WILEY, D DOUBLE E, JAMMER



PLATINUM 45 FEATURING MORE FIRE OII

GO! BEAT 12" 2002

Pirate radio culture evolves in small increments, month by month. The onset of one genre or sub-flava overlaps with the twilight of its predecessor. There are rarely clean breaks. Still, every so often a track comes along that yell "IT'S THE NEW STYLE!" in your face. "Dil" was one of them. Drawing on the most anti-pop, street vanguard elements in black music history – ragga's twich 'n' lurch, electro's ifrigidity, jump-up Jungle's bruising bass blows – producer Platinum 45 created a most unlikely number seven hit. Factor in the barely decipherable jockey of More Fire's Lethal B, Ozzi B and Neeko, and the result was one of the most abrasively alien *Top Of The Pops* appearances ever. The tune's pogo-like hard-bound bass and uncouth Cockneyragga charts mean that "Dil" has more in common with Cockney Rejects-style punk than you'd imagine. "Dil" was Grime's biggest hit to date, before the genre even had a name.

MUSICAL MOB

PULSE X (VIP MIX)

INSPIRED SOUNDS 12" 2002

Widely regarded at the time as UK Garage's absolute nadir, "Pulse X" is actually a pivotal track: the scene's first purpose-built MC tool. Locating a new rhythm at the exact intersection of electro and Gabba, "Pulse" is virtually unlistenable – those dead-eyed claps, those numbly concussive kicks – on its own. But in combination with a great MC, the skeletal rhythm becomes an instant, massive intravenous jolt of pure adrenaline. It's not just the headbanging energy, though, it's the track's very structure that is radical. "Pulse X" was the first eight-bit tune, so-called because the rhythm switches every eight bars, thereby enabling MCs to take turns to drop 16 bars of rhymes using both beat patterns. From being UK Garage's death rattle, "Pulse X" rescued the scene, rudderless and demoralised after two-step's pop bubble burst. The sheer phallospheric rigour of "Pulse X" gave the scene a spine and a forward direction.

DIZZEE RASCAL

I LUV U/WEDEX

XL 12" 2002

Circling as a white label from summer 2002 onwards, "I Luv U" turned London grime culture around as much as "Pulse X". Legendarily creating the track in a single afternoon during a school music class, Dizzee took the same sort of sounds Musical Mob used – Gabba-like distorted kickdrums, shearing metal claps – and turned them into actual music. Add a teenage MC genius desperate to announce himself to the world and you have Grime's "Anarchy In The UK". The punk parallel applies because of the harsh Englishness of Dizzee's vocal timbre and the lovelessness of the lyric, which depicts the pitfalls of the, er, dating game from the POV of too-much-too-young 16 year olds whose hearts have been calloused into premature cynicism. Dizzee's snotty derision is almost eclipsed by the retort from female MC Jeannie Jacques, who throws "That girl's some bitch yunno" back in his face with the equally corrosive "That boy's some prick yunno". The original white label featured the "Luv U" instrumental but tossed away on the XL re-release's B-side is the classic "Weedx". Dizzee's stressed delivery makes you picture stoner coming out of his ears and the music – beats like ice floes cracking, shrill synth-

tingles – renders obsolete the entire previous half-decade of retro-electro in one foul swoop.

WILEY

ESKIMO

WILEY KAT RECORDINGS 12" 2002

ICE RINK

WILEY KAT RECORDINGS 12" 2003

Ex-PUG but at this point still Rolling Deep, Wiley invented an entire mini-genre of low key, emaciated instrumentals: asymmetrically structured grooves based around sidewinder B-lines that "Sirey downstairs" (as DJ Paul Kennedy put it) and glinting, fragmentary melodies. From his legion of imitators, these tended to be strictly MC-functional beats, but in Wiley's case, more often than not the tracks are highly listenable standalone aesthetic objects even without rhymes. The first in an ongoing series of ice-themed tunes ("Iglo", "Frostbite", "Snowcat", et al), "Eskimo" was the blueprint for this darkly-yet-catchy micro-genre (which Wiley dubbed "Eskibeat"). "Ice Rink" took the concept of MC tool to the next level. Instead of just being sold as an instrumental for MCs to use, it was released in some eight versions featuring different MCs. Spread across two 12"s, "Ice Rink" constituted a de facto nodum album. Dizzee's turn is the standout, his scrawny voice coiling the impudence of someone at the top of his game, as he invites all haters to plant their lips upon his posterior: "Kiss from the left to the right/Kiss off my black bum-cheeks two white". Wiley's palsy of gated doo-doom kicks and mercury-splash blips jostles with Dizzee for your attention.

JAMMER

WEED MAN

HOT SOUND 12" 2002

JAMMER FEATURING D DOUBLE E

BIRDS IN THE SKY

HOT SOUND 12" 2003

2003 saw a slew of eight-bit instrumentals suffused with codoriental exoticism. As incongruous as a pagoda plopper smack dab in the centre of Bow, "Weed Man" is the supreme example of "sinogram", Hyperdub Welzine's term for this microgenre. Produced by Nasty Crew's Jammer, the track is dedicated to "all the marijuana smokers" and appropriately the tempo is torped to a Trip-Hoppy degree. The loping, sprawled rhythm flashes back to Sylvian-Sakamoto's "Bamboo Music", while the ceremonial baseline and breathy flute conjure mind's eye imagery of Zen gardens and temples. But where Wiley's similar excursions Eastwards were fuelled by record-buying trips to Sterns, Jammer most likely derived his notion of oriental mystery from videogame music and martial arts movie soundtracks. "Birds In The Sky" has a similarly medieval atmosphere but, apart from the plucky twang of some kind of stringed Far Eastern instrument, is less obviously an ethnological forgery. The solo debut of one of Grime's greatest MCs, D Double E, "Birds" has a brooding meditative aura. The lyric pivots around the bizarre trope of a verbal drive-by, the MC firing off word-bullets "Like birds in the sky/One of your breeders in the eye".

RIKO & TARGET

CHOSEN ONE

AIM HIGH 12" 2004

RUFF SQUAD

LETHAL INJECTION

WHITE LABEL 12" 2004

Former PUG stalwart and man behind the ace Am-

High compilations, Target here creates one of Grime's most stringently cinematic epics, placing a heart-tugging orchestral refrain amid a strange decanted drum track whose furies of claps and kicks seem to trip over themselves. That groove's sensation of impeded yet steadfast forward motion fits the lyric's theme of determination and destiny. In his smoky, pot-laced bantone, Riko (another PUG alumnus) counsels calmness and composure to all those struggling, whether they're aspiring MCs striving to make it or regular folk trying to make it through everyday strife: "Use your head to better through/cause you are the chosen one." The synth swells favoured by Ruff Squad also have a cinematic gravitas, like gangsta Vangelis. "Lethal Injection", though, is one of their more minimalist efforts, consisting of a wibby keyboard line, the boom of a heavy echoey kick drum and the Squad's rapid fire jabber, swathed in a suruminating shroud of reverbs and background chat. Not a tearjer like "Chosen One", but incredibly atmospheric.

TERROR DANJAH

INDUSTRY STANDARD EP

AFTERSHOCK 12" 2003

VARIOUS

PAY BACK EP (THE REMIX)

AFTERSHOCK 12" 2003

You could justly describe Terror Danjah as one of the most accomplished electronic musicians currently active. On tracks like "Juggling" and "Sneak Attack", the intricate syncopation, texturised beats, spatielised production, and "abstract sounds" (Danjah's own phrase) makes this "headphone Grime" – not something that could be claimed for too many operators on the scene. Yet all this finesse is marshalled in service of a fantastically doomy and monolithic mood. Gothic in the original barbarian invader meaning, the atmosphere of domineering darkness is distilled in Danjah's audio-logo, a demonic cackle that resembles some jeering, leering cyborg death-dearwth, which appears in all of his productions and remixes. "Creep Crawler", the first tune on *Industry Standard*, and its sister track *Frontline (Creep Crawler Mix)*, which kicks off *Pay Back*, are Danjah's sound at its most pungently oppressive. "Creep Crawler" begins with the producer smacking aloud ("Heh heh, they're gonna hate me now"), then a bonecrushing beat stomps everything in its path, while ominous horn blasts punnett in the lower midrange and synths wince like the onset of a migraine. From its opening "something wicked this way comes" note sequence onwards, Big Ed's original "Frontline" was hair-raising already. Danjah's remix of his acolyte's monsterine essentially merges it with "Creep Crawler", deploying the same astringent synth dissonance and trademark bass-blare fanfares (filtered to create a weird sensation of suppressed bombast) but to even more intimidating and shudder-inducing effect.

MARK ONE VERSUS PLASTICMAN

HARD GRAFT 1/HARD GRAFT 2

CONTINUOUS 12" 2003

LOEFAH

BOMBAY SQUAD

FROM VARIOUS: GRIME 2 (REPHLEX CO) 2004

If you hadn't already guessed from the name, Grime inverts values. Duty, strikin', even disgustin' – all are positive attributes in Grime parlance. So when I say "Hard Graft" is utterly dismal, you'll know this is the thumbs up. Grime often represents itself as gutter



music. *Mark One* and *Plasticman* go further and deeper with this track, plunging into the sewage system. Full of clanking beats, septic gurglings, gene echoes and scuttling percussion, "Hard Graft" makes you imagine pipes, storm drains, dark chambers.

Mark One, *Plasticman* and their cohorts constitute not so much a subgenre of Grime as a side genre, running adjacent to the same proper. The sound is teedy, MC-free and more danceable than Grime. Although a number of black producers are involved, you could fairly describe this style's sonic coding as whiter than Grime, and situated it on a Euro continuum running through Belgian Industrial Techno (Meng Syndicate, BD Ami) through the cold Technoid end of revo (Neubulus II) to No U-Turn's Techstep and Photek-style Neurofunk (the beats on "Hard Graft" sometimes recall his "Ni Ten Ichi Ryu"). *Plasticman's* proximity to the Richter Hawtin alias seems telling.

The black component to this side genre is dub. Loefah's clanking skank connects to a lineage of Industrial/roots/UK music: *DnU*, bleep 'n' bass, The Drb, Techno-Animal. "Bombay Squad" is built around what feels like a half-finished, or partially erased, groove: massive echo-laden snare cracks, a liquid pitter of tablas situated in a localised corner of the mix and... that's it, apart from the dark river of sub-bass that propels the track forward. The title's intertextual traces include Public Enemy's producers and 2 Bad Mics' raw anthem "Bombscare", but actually allude to the track's sole coloration, the plaintive ululation of a Bollywood diva.

WONDER

WHAT

DUMPLINER 12" 2004

SLK

HYPEI HYPEI (DJ WONDER REFIX)

SMOKE/MINISTRY OF SOUND 12" 2005

Wonder works on the cusp between Grime proper and the *Plasticman One*/Loefah sound. "What" makes something compellingly atmospheric out of the most meagre components: a beat dragging like a wounded leg, sub-bass yawning ominously like a portal into the underworld, a dejected one-finger melody suggestive of an autistic desultorily twirling with a xylophone, occasional dank blips of electronics. Overall, the audio mise en scène is something like "twilight falls on the battle-scarred moon". Also vaguely reminiscent of The Movie's gloomy brand of Ambient Gabba, Wonder's remix of "Hypei Hypei" replaces the perky original backing track (produced by the great Sticky) with a green-drone of sick Technoise. This catastrophe in slowmo makes a marvellously incongruous backdrop for the roaring vocal hook chanted by North West London crew SLK.

JAMMER FEATURING KANO

BOYS LOVE GIRLS

HOT SOUND 12" 2005

WONDER FEATURING KANO

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE

NEW ERA 12" 2004

TERIOR DANJAH FEATURING KANO & SADIE

SO SURE

AFTERSHOCK 12" 2004

The backing tracks are fabulous – Jammer's frenetic snare-riff clatter, Wonder's tonally harrowed synths, Danjah's echoing ripples of idyllic electronics – but it's MC Kano who really shines. With some Grime rhymesters, the flow resembles an involuntary

discharge (D Double E being the ultimate exponent of MCing as automatic poetry). But even at his most hectic, as on "Boys Love Girls", Kano always sounds in complete control. All poise and deliberation, he invariably sounds like he's weighing up the angles, calculating his moves, calibrating which outcomes serve his interests. That's blatant on "Boys" and "What Have You Done", both cold-hearted takes on modern romance that depict sex in transactional terms, a ledger of positives and minuses, credits and debits; a war of the genders in which keeping your feelings checked and maintaining distance is strategically crucial. But it comes through even in the gorgious balled "So Sure", on which Kano blurs the border between loverman and soldier drawing up plans for conquest: "Ain't got time to be one of them guys just watching you and wasting time/Next time I'm clocking you I'm stopping you to make you mine." As much as the acutely observed lyrical details, it's the timbre of Kano's voice that's enthralling: slick yet grainy, like varnished wood, and knotty with halting cadences that convince you he's thinking these thoughts aloud for the very first time.

DAVINCHE

DIRTY CANVAS EP

PAPERCHASE RECORDINGS 12" 2004

ESSENTIALS

HEADQUARTERS

WHITE LABEL 12" 2004

"So Sure" is an example of the burgeoning subgenre R&G, basically a transparent attempt to lure the ladies back onto the floor, after they'd been turned off by the testosterone-heavy vibe of tracks more suitable for moshing than sex dancing. As the name R&G, short for "rhythm and Grime", suggests, the mini-genre replicates two-step's original move of copping American R&B's jazzy arrangements and dva-melismas. Alongside Terior Danjah, Davinche pioneered R&G with tunes like "Leave Me Alone". Too often these attempts at Brit-Beyoncé fell short owing to a lack of grounding in songcraft and the studio art of mixing vocalists, and end up sounding slightly thin and shabby. So I prefer Davinche's instrumental efforts like the Dirty Canvas EP series. The quasi-soundtrack orchestration of "Stinger" – flurrying strings, decaying tones from a softly strung gong – are designed to swothe any MC who rhymes over it an aura of slightly hammed majesty. Built out of similar pizzicato elements meshed to a beat like a clockwork contraption gone haywire, "Madness", I'd wager, drew inspiration from the paranoia zone reached after one tooke too many: racing thoughts, pounding heart, jangled nerves, the suspicion that you might just be losing your mind.

Grime is synonymous with East London, but other parts of the city are starting to get a look-in. Essentials, Davinche's crew, operate out of the South. This powerful sense of territoriality is integral to the concept of "Headquarters", which draws on the talents of a veritable battalion of MCs, some guests and some from Essentials' own barracks. At each chorus, a drill sergeant barks questions at the MC who's stepping up for his turn: "State your name, soldier", "State your location" (usually "East" or "South", sometimes a specific postal district), "Who you repin?" (usually a crew, like Essentials, NASTY, Aftershock, but sometimes just "myself"). Then the sergeant orders each recruit to get down and "give me 16" – not press-ups, but 16 bars of rhymes. The amazing production seals the conceptual deal, the

chorus being accompanied by cello-like instrumentation that's been digitally contorted into an unearthly writh-like whirr, or a cyberwolf howling at the moon.

LETHAL B FEATURING FUMIN.

D DOUBLE E, NAPPA, JAMAKABI, NEEKO, FLOW DAN, OZZI B, FORCER, DEMON & HOT SHOT

POW (FORWARD)

RELENTLESS 12" 2004

Following a failed mainstream-bd album, *More Fire* looked all washed up in 2003, but Lethal B rebuilt their street rep from the ground up. In 2004, his "Forward" rhythm became the scene's biggest anthem. Renamed "Paw" on account of its main vocal hook, it ultimately barged its way to the outskirts of the Top Ten, achieving Grime's highest chart placing since... well, "Dif". The rhythm is basic veering on crude, a madly gyrating loop that resembles an out of control carousel. "Paw!", Lethal's chorus chant, evokes the fistfights of comic book superheroes. Matching the track's rowdy vibe (it was reportedly banned in some clubs for inciting mayhem on the floor), a squadron of top MCs lay on the ultraviolence, the cartoon flavour of which can be gleaned from Demon's immortal warning, "You don't wanna have some beef/Bring some beef you'll lose some teeth."

JAMMER FEATURING WILEY,

D DOUBLE E, KANO & DURTY DOOGZ

DESTRUCTION REMIX

WHITE LABEL 12" 2004

D DOUBLE E & P-JAM

ANGER MANAGEMENT

OCZ RECORDINGS 12" 2004

Like "Paw", "Destruction" is a rollercoaster of pugilistic noise and lyrical aggro, but Jammer's production is marginally more sophisticated, slicing 'n' dicing brassy fanfares (probably from blaxplotation movies) and filtering them to create a sort of surging yet-leashed effect, like the track is simmering with pent-up rage. The four some-leading MCs rise to the occasion, from Wiley's riffed variations on "I Know Trouble but Trouble says he don't know you", to Kano's tongue-twisting gangsta boat "From lamp post to lamp post, we run the road". But the star performance comes from D Double. Soundin' like he's battling multiple speech impediments, he expectorates gotted gouts of raw verbiage. "Splitting" is too decorous a word for his rhyme style; retching is closer. Witness Double's astonishing first six bars on "Destruction", a gangtoye gibber closer to heteroglyphics than language, seemingly emanating from the same infralumbar zone (ggg). Pop plumbied on "TV Eye". On Double's first solo single since "Birds In The Sky", rising producer P-Jam's snaking wooze of gaseous malice sparks one of the MC's most Tourette performances. Barely tethered to the beat's bar scheme, Double seems to be wading waist-deep through sonic sludge. He boasts of "sucking up MCs like a hoover", an image possibly owed by the Metamash-like miasma unleashed by P-Jam.

TRIM

BOOGIEMAN

AFTERSHOCK 12" 2004

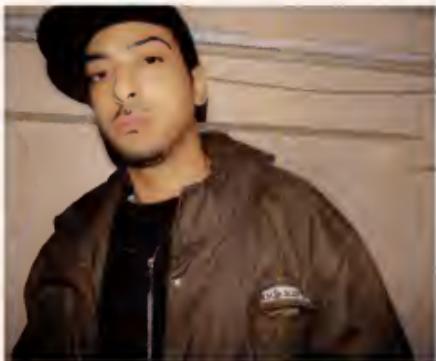
BRUZA

NOT CONVINCED

AFTERSHOCK 12" 2006

Like most dance producers, Grime beatmakers

TOP: TARGET
MIDDLE: RIKO
BOTTOM: TERROR DANJAH



typically invent a striking sound, then wear it out with endless market-milking iterations. Terror Danjah has often approached that dangerzone, but on "Boogiemani", he shows how much scope for inventiveness arrangement remains in the "Creep Crawler" template. You can hear the cartoon-comic wooh-wooh ghostly touches best on the instrumental version, "Haunted" (on Aftershock's *Roardsweeper EP*). "Boogiemani" itself is a showcase for rising star Trim, here honing his persona of scoffing imperturbability: "I'm not scared of the boogiemani/I scare the boogiemani."

On "Not Convinced", Danjah draughts a whole new template that reveals the producer's roots in drum 'n' bass (the track's futuristicingles vaguely recalls Foul Play's "Being With You" remix). Again, though, the MC makes it hard to focus on theiddim. Bruza incorporates British intonation and idioms: the not-flow of stilted English cadences becomes a new flow. It sounds "butiful and British", as Bruza puts it. As his name suggests, the MC has also perfected a hardman persona that feels authentically English rather than a gangsta fantasy based on Compton or Kingston. He exudes a laconic, steely menace redolent of bouncers.

"Not Convinced" extrapolates from this not-easily-impressed persona to create a typology of character in which the world is divided into the serious and the silly, the latter lacking the substance and conviction to give their words authority. Bruza addresses, and dresses down, a wannabe MC: "I'm not convinced/Since you've been spittin'/I haven't believed one word/Not one inch/Not even a millimetre/To me you sound like a silly speaker/Silly features in your style/You spit silly."

KANO FEATURING D DOUBLE E & DEMON RELOAD IT

669 RECORDS CD/LP 2005 (FORTHCOMING)

Circling back to "Bound 4 The Reload", the track "Reload It" celebrates the pirate radio and rave culture of the DJ rewind, when the crowd holler their demand for the selector to wheel and come again. Until Grime, the trigger for rewinds would be a killer sampled vocal lick, thrilling bass drop, or even just a mad breakbeat.

Nowadays, the MC being king, the crowd clamours to hear their favourite rhymes. "This is what it means when *DJs* reload it/*That 16* was mean and *he* knows it," explains Kano, before listing the other top dog MCs who get nuff rewinds (two of them, Double and Demon, guest on the track). "I get a reload purely for the flow," Kano preens, and you can see why as he glides with lethal panache between quicktime rapping and a leisurely, drawn-out gart that seems to drag on the beat to slow it down. The track itself, which is co-produced by Kano and Diplo, is all shimmering excitement, pivoting around a sparingly filtered riff that ascends and descends the same four notes, driven by a funky rampage of live-sounding drums and punctuated by horn samples, Beni G's scratching and orgasmic girl-moans.

The Old Skool breakbeat-like energy suggests an attempt to sell the notion of Grime as British Hip-Hop, yet if Transatlantic crossover is the intent, that's subverted by the localised, Grime-reflexive lyric. "Reload It" encapsulates the conflicted impulses that fuel this scene: underground insularity versus an extrovert hunger to engage with, and conquer, the whole wide world. □

Charts

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Anthony Britton
Marion Feldman
Jerome Hollingshead
Kelli Hill
Bastard Marbles
Clapton Beefheart
Kenseth Ghar
A Setton Ratto
A Setton Prent
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Iggy Pop
Erith Dopdy
Lee Morris
Tubby Hayes
Cynthia Plastow-Caster

Ning Nong 15

Maria With Wounds
Shangri-La Radio Seven Sonic Structures Flora Unser
(GCR)
Sun Ra
Strange Strings (El Sueno)
Les Baxter
The Big Easy Mix (Capitol)
Well Eyes
Lori Sockles 10" (GCR)
end.
The Sounds Of Disaster (Special/Hymns)
Enya - Sufi
Munica Retrouve (Din Schachet)
Sugar & Swiss
Ongelager (Hansel)
Imperialist
All Watered Over By Machines Of Loving Grace
(M/Mortal)
Sublime
A New White (Ltd)
Mirage
Plasses Of Light (Three Poplars)
Geoff Mullican
Thirty Six Million Manifestations (self-released)
Booridens
Seduction/Moon Of Sun (Wenren Japan)
Karen Fairchild Whistler
Another (Kranky)
The White Sons
We Walk The Young Earth (Family Vineyard)
Orlok
Assessor (Special)

Audifono Musical 15

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Bitter Onion Staff (Dion Note)
Squeakspurter
Feed Me Vile Thugs (Rephiled)
Eso
Another Green World (Virgin)
Low
Songs For A Dead Pilot (Kosky)
Gene Clark
No Other (Elektra)
Left Banke
There Once Be A Storm (Mercury)
Johnny Cash
The Fabulous Johnny Cash (Columbia)
Flux
Windy (Polar)
Steve Stevens
Lesson No 1 (Acute)
The Jimi Hendrix Experience
Aint Bold As Love (MCA)
Sam Phillips
Sam Phillips (Phil Spector Jockey)
Augustus Pablo
Dubbing With The Dot German Recordegas
Raphe Mats
Consequently (Eremite)
Tamara Dreiz
Sonidos Novos (Quero-Hepavox)
Arthur Russell
Calling Out Of Context (Audika)

The Office Ambience

Josephine Foster
Hotel Syria, I Will Lead You (Ecclesi)

Brooks
Unspoken (Mia Musa)

Magik Markers
I Hunt My Gutter, Ein (Ecclesi/Piano/Apology)

Armenian Project
Taming The Taming (Vestis Surges)

Perpetual Hunger (Fat Cat)

Veritas
Black & Proud: The Soul Of The Black Panther (Isa)

Veritas
Veritas

Children Must (Staatsgold)

Musikalia
Invisible Forces (Marsolier/Imbalance)

Hated City
Complete Studio Recordings (Isra)

Erosia
Aluna Ni Ute (Southern Lord)

Toshi Ichiyagi
Opera From The Works Of Tadashi Yoko (Bridge)

Wu Ming
Lost And Safe (Bontata)

Various
Tokyo Flashback Vol. 5 (PSF)

Seige French
A Head Full Of Disaster (Epitaph)

Astrophic
Unhurt (Warp)

Various
Tibetan Buddhist Rites From The Monasteries Of
Bhutan (Sub Rosa)

Compiled by The Trower

Compiled by Jim Siegel, Ning Nong Radio, Tuesdays
10pm EST on WZBG 90.3 FM, Boston, www.wzbg.org

Compiled by Audifono Musical, Barcelona:
audifono_musical@yahoo.es

Compiled by The Wire Sound Systems

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email charts@newsws.co.uk

Elliott Sharp's library, see page 38

UNDERWORLD

THE JOB WILLIAM S BURROUGHS AND

PESSOA THE BOOKS OF DISQUIET

BLOOD MERIDIAN

OUTER DARK

CHILD OF

THE PRETTY HORNETS

MARATHA

THE BEHIND US

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Soundcheck

This month's selected CDs and vinyl



Evan Parker in Scotland

**EVAN PARKER/JOHN COXON/
ASHLEY WALES**

EVAN PARKER WITH BIRDS

TREADER CD

**JOHN COXON/EVAN PARKER/
MARK SANDERS/ASHLEY WALES**

TRIO WITH INTERLUDES

TREADER CD

MARK SANDERS

SWALLOW CHASE

TREADER CD

More than 40 years on since musicians from many different countries and backgrounds cut their ties with jazz and post-Cage indeterminacy in order to improvise music without structuring or rules, we still have to consider the implications of freedom. Secret codes of behaviour, clandestine strategies and hidden rules for technological acceptability have always lurked at the edges of the Improv world. How free is free, what price freedom without construction and other questions whose heat has long dissipated in the cold night.

Also dissipated to some degree in recent years are the anomalies, as younger players have come onto the scene after major conflicts have been driven to a workable conclusion. Ashley Wales and John Coxon are good examples of players who refuse to recognise any incompatibility between composing, popular music forms, cliques and camps, age and hairstyle, electric instruments and sampling on the one hand, and free improvisation on the other. They are proactive curators who get their hands dirty in the business of playing, as well as in the business of business, and this means that when the experiment fails to ignite on stage, they stand to lose as much face as the musicians they invite. This, in my opinion, is a good thing.

These three releases, nicely packaged in pastel pink, green and blue card folders, each one embossed on the front with a gold animal, represent the small group end of their ambitions. Having taken part in one of their large group adventures, I feel it's a safer bet to work with quartets, trios, duos and

David Toop monitors a garrulous and eloquent dialogue between generations of improvisors that rekindles old questions about freedom and tradition

solo, though the social implications of improvising with large and motley crews will always be tempting. The influence of Evan Parker is audible, not just musically, since all three are recorded at Gateway Studios, an inspiring live room in Kingston-Upon-Thames long favoured by Parker as a place which feels fantastic, sounds fantastic and documents the pleasure of the experience with great sensitivity.

I'll pass quickly over the Mark Edwards solo CD of drums and percussion. He is a player with a wonderfully light, swift touch, and the quality of recording gives me the sensation of crouching inside his drum kit, feeling the air of sticks as they fly like swallows over skin and cymbal, the sensual softness of fizzing metal, muted drumming, snare scrape, gong hum. Yes, I've heard (something like) it before, but at the same time, this forward momentum over surfaces of haptic exultude has seduced me.

Starting out scatologically is something to do with hearing an acoustic instrument beautifully recorded in a perfect live room. Nothing wrong with that; quite the opposite, but does it make the heart beat faster, and if it doesn't, what's wrong with us (or me)? From one point of view, it's the most exciting thing of all, given the current predominance of electronically generated and modulated sound sources. The quartet of Coxon, Wales, Parker and Edwards on *Trio With Interludes* sounds very fresh because it suggests an approach that might have been formed in the 1960s, if free improvisation had stuck close to Sun Ra, Larry Young and Miles Davis, rather than opting to be acoustic and European. Over Roland MKS 80 keyboard tails, a repeated bassa note, chewy Wurlitzer trademark armpunches, gurgles, extrusions and grumbles, all sounding like small animals being rendered into food products. Parker on tenor saxophone blazes like a fire in a polyester factory.

The music is structured in the most obvious way: hectic rushing here and there, to and fro, followed by the interludes, which meander a little and dither among intriguing sonic mixtures both acoustic, electronic and Satanic, followed by further episodes of Velcro rippling, baby elephant walks and flying

saucers rock 'n' roll. It's all a little bit follow-my-leader – here's a thing, quick and slow, where's your thing? But as a session, which it is, the overwhelming impression is that everybody had a thoroughly good time. It's infectious, so demands to be shared.

Evan Parker With Birds is dedicated to Steve Lacy, who surely listened to a lot of birdsong in his life, and could indeed play with the strange unforced glamour and complexity of a songbird. Coxon and Wales provide the soundscapes, derived from bird vocalisations recorded by such past luminaries of the avian sound recording world as Jean C Roche and Eric Simms. Since Parker (on soprano and tenor) enters the avary with much the same phrase as he used to gain purchase in the soundscapes of Basil Kirchin 35 years ago, comparisons with *Worlds Within Worlds* are inevitable. I'd suggest the results are more successful, if only because the interaction appears to be happening in real time and Parker has become a whole lot more experienced at inter-species encounters.

What is fascinating is the way in which he begins as a member of the human species, repeating phrases of exquisite musicality that don't quite gel with collective signalling from a different wavelength. As so often with Parker's playing, these introductory remarks, a form of convoluted, stereotypical address that weighs the air and measures the quality of the opposition, give way to deeper ruminations. I won't say that he grows feathers and a beak, or that his heart rate speeds up to a tiny, fragile eurhythm, but muscular skin is definitely shed. Reed abandoned, the saxophone keys ascend, fluttering above a supernatural flock from the Hitchcock school of special effects. Later we hear distant church bells. Almost a John Major moment of warm beer and little old ladies riding bicycles over the village green, the combination is a happy reminder that change ringing has for centuries endured as indigenous tradition, a form of vernacular systems music, or generative sound art, played unselfconsciously by amateurs and despite the ecclesiastical point of origin, a form of music so peculiarly inhuman as to fit the brief to perfection. □

KAORU ABE
WINTER 1972

PSF CD

**KAORU ABE &
SABU TOYOZUMI
(OVERHANG PARTY)**

ZENSEI
GISCO ZEP
BY RIBA KOPP

In Japan the 27th anniversary of a death is marked by special ribbons, states PSF founder Hiden Iizumori in his brief, affecting sleeve-note eulogy to Japanese improvising sex player Kaoru Abe, who was just 29 when he died on 9 September 1978 of a stomach rupture after a decade of hard living and fast playing. Released in Tokyo on Christmas Day 2004, Winter 1972 is thus a timely memorial to Abe's spindly-limbed music.

Hitherto unknown as an impossibly reed-banging LF, the CD is sonorously scored by a faint, yet enticing echo that becomes audible during the album's scant breaths for pleasure. The effect is akin to listening to a well-worn tape playing both sides at once, but happily this recording captures the saxophonist at an early youthful peak, when his speed of thought leaves mercifully few silences for such a flaw to really annoy. There's a frantic four-minute blast of a piece punctuating the two 20-minute plus improvisations that make up the bulk of the disc, but Abe is most thrilling over the distance, when he is driven to engag every possible timbral change – from raw-toned honk to briefly glimpsed, heartbreakingly lyrical moments – as he endlessly reconfigures his soul-searching phrases.

The Quito double LP is a predictably unusual set, featuring the shakuhachi in a duo with free drummer Saito Kiyonori. It features four sets recorded over three nights at Gary, Tokyo, between February and April 1978. Housed in a plain white gatefold outer sleeve embossed with their names, project/album title and the broadest slogan "to be free from old costume [sic] and restraint", it purples more thrills than it delivers. Unlike the August dates documented on the double *Overhang Party* CD on the Ains label, these largely desultory early outings are singularly lacking in tension, only igniting on the final side. One for Abe scholars only.

**A HAWK AND A HACKSAW
DARKNESS AT NOON**

LEAF CD

BY TOM RIDGE

It seems a mighty long way from Albuquerque for Jeremy Barnes, extreme drummer with Neutral Milk Hotel, now reinvented as an unclassifiable auteur with a penitent bent. *Darkness At Noon*, his second album as *A Hawk And A Hackaw*, was recorded in Embden in Leicestershire, Prague and New Mexico, and its synthesis of folk forms matches its glottoblocking engine.

It's notably un-American, set in a political sense but in the way it takes European and Latin elements as its base and pretty much sidesteps North American musical influences – even down to the fact that Barnes denied his project's name from a line spoken by Sancho Panza in Cervantes's *Don Quixote*. But although it absorbs characteristics from various traditions, Barnes's music retains an otherworldly quality that gives his compositions a markedly strange hue.

This is no worthy exercise in emulating ethnicity; rather, it's a busy medley of freestyle and multifaceted folk song structures. The opening, "Laughter In The Dark" mixes some degree of alt-rock banality with its multifaceted harmonies and low bass tones, but these have to compete with declamatory trumpet riffs and cascading percussion. Thereafter, Barnes leads us through a series of pieces encompassing spindly folk jigs and whining, Eastern-flavoured rhythms, with a detour to the wheezy, slow waltz of "Goodbye Great Britain" and the organic psychadelia of "Lady Of The Vilain". Accordion figures loom throughout, bolstered by maniacal trumpets, violins and cassettes, but Barnes skillfully interweaves his influences into original tracks where it would be hard to detect a whiff of kitch. *Darkness At Noon* works because it doggedly pursues its convictions through to a satisfying conclusion and in doing so creates its own kind of orbit logic.

**THE AEOLIAN STRING
ENSEMBLE**

ECLIPSE

ROBERT COE

BY JILL HORNIG

The aeolian harp was quite popular in the 19th century, having been a source of inspiration for Romantic poets Shelley and Coleridge. It is a long rectangular box equipped with a resonator and covered with gut strings attuned to the same note. When the wind hits a particular velocity and blows across the strings, the aeolian harp produces a fluid series of harmonic overtones that resonates from the Romantic era described as the music of fables. For those poets, the aeolian harp became a metaphor of man as an instrument driven by internal passions as well as the external whims of nature. This metaphor extends into a definition of consciousness for the Romantics, as one cannot live unless attuned to both internal and external forces.

Heavily indebted not only to the aeolian harp's sonorities but also to the Romantic's allusions from the instrument, The Aeolian String Ensemble have been sporadically operational during the past two decades. They first emerged as one of the *Rising From The Red Sands* cassette compilations back in the early 80s, but they weren't heard from again until 1998 when Robert Reichen published *Leesshif* (Ysyan). Since then they have completed the three pieces on *Eclipse* with source material dating back to their earliest incarnations. Despite the huge gaps between sessions, the ensemble are remarkably consistent. This is partly down to the sublime evenness of the aeolian harp, with its sustained tones and subtle tonal fluctuations; but their consistency is best traced to the ensemble's working methods, which have stayed virtually the same throughout their career.

The ensemble firmly establish their windowsides as the fundamental sounds out of which they extract tiny fragments and treat them with ring modulation, signal processing and devices with peculiar names such as the Thruxn transient multiplier and the energy technology thermionic resonator. These ghostly clangs and bell tones are then cast in slowly decaying echoes across a tranquil pool of glassy incoherence. Like the Romantics of old (as well as neo-Romantics like William Basinski), The Aeolian String Ensemble steadfastly celebrate a radiant beauty whose

unstoppable visage is rendered through a yearning sense of melancholia.

AKRON/FAMILY

YOUNG GOD CD

BY SAM DAVIES

Akron/Family have a difficult act to follow. The last time Michael Gira took an unknown under his wing on Young God Records, the prestige (Devinere, Banhart) went on to eclipse the parent, signing for XL like Banhart. Akron/Family's hushed fragility and leftfield pastoralism invite comparison with the loose US scene of folk-derived weirdness: the instrumentation is largely acoustic, the songs are edits of lengthy jamming (imposing all kinds of truncated feedback explorations), and the name suggests these Williamsburg residents form an Ex-Style domestic commune.

On the contrary, the four family members (David Jensen, Seth Daskal, Ryan Vandervelde and Miles Seeman) produce a sound that rings with a sober concentration at odds with the psychiatric agenda of much free folk. Immediately it bewitches electronics and the care with which each beautifully recorded track unfolds recall Chicago post-rock instead. Some occasional eruptions of wildness won't hurt, without scarring the elegiac, late night, early morning ambience. Their compass is broken somewhat by the meandering guitar gear on "Suchness" and septenite slide on "Allard", permitting Akron/Family to escape self-consciousness. But this disc is brimful of quiet and felicitous touches.

ALVA NOTO

TRANSRAPID

RASTER MOTION CD

TRANSVISION

RASTER MOTION CD

TRANSSPRAY

RASTER MOTION CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Created over a two year period and 'closing a circle' first begun with the release in 2001 of *Transform*, the three carefully packaged CDs that constitute Caetano Veloso's *Tarsila* triptych offer between them the coordinates for a shifting assessment zone bounded by raw data on one side and information design on the other. As these are essentially the same thing in differing states, it's probably more helpful to see them as complementing rather than opposing one another.

To this end, *Transrapid* presents itself as a set of loosely interconnected but precisely related components. A set of individual 3" CDs, each embedded in a heavily overprinted 5" transparent disc, come packaged in overwound uniform cardboard sleeves. Each CD runs for approximately 21 minutes, although the length and distribution of the tracks can vary: *Transrapid* and *Transvase* both contain four rhythmically tight compositions, while *Transpray* has eight less obviously modulated pieces. All three parts come with a corresponding essay, specially commissioned for this project, from Ulf Poschardt on speed and popular culture, Kodev Eshun on the complex exchanges that take place between the concept of *Utopia* and the processes of change, and Marco Polfijn on the applied chemistry of stealth technology.

Could *Tarsila* east just as happy on a single

CD, with or without all three essays? Decidedly not. More important than the pieces themselves is the way in which Veloso has successfully manipulated them, pitting uniformity against singularity and repetition against variation, in order to map out a terrain that would remain, without the listener's active participation, a mere collection of patterns and possibilities.

AUTECHE

UNTITLED

WARP CD

BY DAVID STUBBS

By the time of their last album, 2003's *Draft 7.30*, Autec's Sean Booth and Rob Brown had voyaged a long, long way from their origins, into regions and arhythmic combinations unexplored by previous techno or electronic adventures. They suggest the realms of the absolutely unprecedented. All of which made them problematic, for some. That their permutations hadn't been previously devised was not in itself any particular reason why they should be. There they hung, the works of Autec, suspended like abstract sound sculptures, non-representative, barely imaginable, deliberately devoid of context or function. But what was the value or necessity in these pieces of apparently randomly generated prior-patter, corrugated scrapping and synth burp, arbitrary and neutral?

It's tempting to concur with these sentiments at a cursory listen to *Untitled*, and a glance at titles like "Ipswich Section". But attend closely and tracks like opener "LCD" reveal through their insistence and integrity their shape and warmth. "Augmatic Desert" is especially fine, a formidable piece of sonic machinery, sprung out deceptively irregular clusters of ball bearings into the void, going nowhere but for four outswings its welcome.

If anything, however, Autec have pulled back the throttle on their excursions into the unknown. Some tonal passages and conventional Techno riffs here are a throwback to their mid-90s work, especially on the last two tracks, "The Trees", whose title is a pointed departure from their usual world-as-soundshape tendencies, is regular as clockwork/Kirchner in its unspooling, while the 15 minute-plus closer "Sublim" revels to the old orthodoxy of repetition, albeit Autec-style (in its repeater... as their own language has it, is an especially op phrase). But for all that, there's a sense that, following *Draft 7.30*, Autec peered further into the unknown and felt they couldn't abandon their selves completely. As they say in accompanying press notes to this album, "We can't get away from the fact that we're DJs."

BIBIO

FI

MUSH CD

BY DAVID STUBBS

Recommended to Mash by Marcus Egan from Boards Of Canada, Bibio, aka Stephen Wilkinson, recorded this album of acoustic and decayed electronic instrumental pieces in London and Wolverhampton. His brief opener is immediately arresting, delicate and trilling withal, wispy strands, before bursting like springline into the full-blown acoustic rusticity of "Bawley In White Puffin". Thereafter, *FI* lets between pretty, unassuming plucking and more twisted, amorphous interludes. An acoustic face like "Puffin", childhood memories of old children's

Soundcheck

programmes are re-evoked, memories of dragging out old clockwork toys from the attic.

"Lakeside" and "Cluster At Cwm Eos" are like blurry, yellowed photographs of old semi-rural landscapes, practically crumbling on impact, like ancient wallpaper. These deliberately aged and distressed sounds are hardly unprecedented — William Basinski and Brian Eno's Foundation spring immediately to mind, as does some of Deadhead's recent work. What really distinguishes FI is that I've never heard this sort of thing done better. More than merely demonstrate a tactic, Bibio follows beautifully through on it. There's a nostalgia at work in these pieces but of the exact sort rather than easy variety. FI prompts you to contemplate the very idea of the semi-forgotten/semi-remembered, the way all things eventually dissolve into the liquid half-life of the subconscious.

BIRD SHOW GREEN INFERNO

KRANKY CD

BY MARC MASTERS

Ben Vida is a multi-instrumentalist for numerous Chicago-based groups, but he is best known for his work in the hypnotic minimalist quartet Town & Country. Green Inferno is his second solo album (following 1999's *Alpha*), though it's dedicated to Bird Show, a duo Vida formed with Town & Country colleague Liz Payne after he recorded the pieces here. A collection of carefully constructed drones and ambiances, Green Inferno is similar to Town & Country in its studied approach, but more aggressive in its use of volume and pitch, and more interested in tribal rhythms and field recorded sounds. Vida has a good ear for constancy and repetition. Whenever he could take a quick sum or sharp leap, he stays put, letting his sounds develop without forcing them into patterns.

Green Inferno begins benignly, with the wavy swoosh of "All Afternoon Part #1" and the flat meander of gong-like bells and high-moaned vocals in "Mind Light". But things accelerate mightily during the album's title track, a rolling drone filled with small bits of percussive and a beat that mimics the clinking of hoses on a cobblestone street. From there, Vida pours a mélange of sounds through his dense dream-mounds. "Always/Never Sleep Part #1" evokes either Krasney stowards like Lubritropic, Local, and, most recently, the massaging ticks of Greg Davis' *Somnia*. The galloping ticks of "Tacos" are enchantingly minimalist, while "Morning/Evening"

lays Tony Conrad-esque violin beneath Vida's breathy singing. Most stunning is the closing "All Afternoon Part #2 (Down Of The Dead)". Using field recordings, rhythmic bells and high-toned whirs, the track echoes Terry Riley's escalating cycles and Angus MacLise's outsider toccas, ending with a primal drone that unites Vida's obsessions — electronic horn, acoustic ambience and woody buzz — into one massive sound.

BLACK BONED ANGEL SUPERECLIPSE

BUCK SPIN CD

BY JIM HANNES

Named after a Godlike song, Black Boned Angel is the work of the unstoppable Campbell Kneale, best known for his sustained electric blearinets as Birchville Cat Motel. For Black Boned Angel, Kneale offers his own interpretation of the desulted Metal Mf by slumping into the same corrosive subharmonic stupor embraced by Metal metal actors Sunn O))) and Earth.

Supereclipse is his first production as Black Boned Angel, although his dappened riffs and growing angular rumble essentially pick up where the last Birchville Cat Motel album *CV: Vampires* left off. Where that BSM album enjoyed a notable career from past Organum bowed cymbal drone scraping into chugging heaviness, Supereclipse finds Kneale sprawling headfirst in Earth/Sunn O))) worship, but his almost raucously crows through a tangle of narcoleptic riffs permanently caught in blunted low end distortion and feedback. About 25 minutes into the album, drums begin to punctuate Kneale's diges and accentuate the deliberately slow chock progressions. An air and siren guitar doubles up on the snuffed riffs providing a black surbunt of panacea, clashtrophobia and transcendence all wrapped up in one drug-addled package. The final entry further cements the album's moltenist with an homage to Swans' "Rapey A Slave" era: under black rhythms and monstrous earthquake riffs. While the influences that went into Supereclipse can be a bit obvious, Campbell Kneale hammers every sound within a devastatingly effective crucible that raises this album to equal that of his heroes.

THE BOOKS LOST AND SAFE

TOM LARSON

During the latter half of its 300 year history, America has been as much about city-building as

range-riding. Yet its leaders and spokesmen often seek to simplify its plurality of voices to a set of reductive ideas and principles of nationhood. The current venue for the antiaxis among certain American underground musicians (Jack Rose, Avlon Family, Experiments, Curruck Co. et al), replotting Country hillbilly and folk terrain in some kind of survivalist flight to the hills, is perhaps a side effect of that tendency. The Books (NY State duo Neck Zammata Whitscher and Paul DeJong) use many similar signifiers, sampling skulles, banjos and acoustic guitars, and singing in a debauched Simon & Garfunkel burlesque. But Lost And Safe's fractured and splintered collage offers a vision of an America closer from its originating natives of statehood, unable to address itself in a public language.

This decidedly Heath sootytail has a range of assistance, including taking Heads, Sparks and David Grubbs, but three albums along, The Books are nailing down a distinctive soundworld of their own, walled only by Matmos (another group fascinated with deconstructing the sonology of the Wild West). On "Smells Like Content", DeJong's cells are diced up and shifted into bass, clenched rhythmic cells moulded from tines, guitars, thumb piano and trimole vocals. The sonropy feel is accentuated by the untroubled found voices and tests, pasted line by line into compound songs, or just used wholesale, as in "Verdict", an outside broadcast in which Salvador Dali can be heard dozing its audience, inducing gentleness of the press. A self-conscious resistance to *classism* can become an irritating bc — sentences end in "uhuh" and "It's just not as, yeah..." The Books are America's new nervousness — intellectual and urban, hiding out in their low-rent apartments, waiting for the storm to blow over.

MATTHEW BURTNER METASAXOPHONE COLOSSUS

INNOVA CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

The title of Matthew Burtner's latest CD bravely ups the ante on Sonny Rollins' 1956 album *Saxophone Colossus*. But this isn't a jazz outing and saxophony isn't quite the point. Burtner extends the sonic potential of his saxophones by using embedded microphones and MIDI processing. Computer-generated sound and an electric feedback system can be used and controlled from the metasaxophone while the standard saxophone sound is retained. Almost all of the material on *Metasaxophone Colossus*

is made by Burtner though "St Thomas Phase" samples Rollins and drummer Max Roach playing one of Rollins' most famous compositions, "St Thomas". These samplings are run through Burtner's computer polyrhythmic and the material is multiplied, stretched, layered and phased in a process akin to plundiphonics. All other tracks on the CD feature 'live' (single take, presumably) performances by Burtner, using various saxophones and software "S-Morph-S" creates when he calls a hybrid computer instrument, as separate saxophone appears as itself while simultaneously mimicking a Tibetan singing prayer bowl. Burtner's visual player bow does what a player bow wouldn't normally do, and his undistorted saxophone roughly maps the metaphysics of which Evan Parker is the most exacting cartographer. The remaining five tracks offer permutations or a theme of sax-triggered electronics, of which the most interesting are "Nosegate 67" and "Delta 1", the former for computer metasaxophone and polyrhythmic, the pulsated figures of "Nosegate 67" dissolve into electronic clouds while a tenor saxophone either selfconsciously approximates solo free improvisation. "Delta 1" is all noise and quasi-guitar fury (think Hendrix at Woodstock performing "The Star-Spangled Banner"), there are intriguing moments on Metasaxophone Colossus, but as an instrumentalist and a composer Burtner is often hampered rather than helped by his computer.

NICK CAVE & THE BAD SEEDS B-SIDES AND RARITIES

MUTE KKCD

BY LOUISE GRAY

The further Nick Cave moves from his songwriting beginnings, the more closely he returns to them. It's now 21 years since The Bad Seeds emerged from the wreckage of The Birthday Party, the point, catastrophic Melbourne punk group that first brought Cave and Mick Harvey to London, and this triple CD continues this contrary motion. It's easy to forget now when faced with the elegance and economy of Cave's more recent albums — certainly since 1996's *The Boatman's Call* — how improvisational both The Birthday Party and, in their early years, The Bad Seeds were within a chosen framework, so it's one of the pleasures of this album that its 56 songs, taken from B-sides, flexions, outtakes and unreleased tracks, demonstrate how that remains the same.

Improvisation, in this instance, doesn't mean

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the 1980s' 100% industrial music of Steven Spielberg's John Belushi's "How He Loved the Moon" clearly has no cognizance for those who would attempt to extract meaning, let alone enjoyment, from this vulgar explosion of rhythmic, chaotic over-the-top aggression. I'm sweating on the floor like a vomiting child.

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the vertiginous parts of songs like "The Merry Seat", but a commitment to variation in a more traditional sense. Indeed, "The Merry Seat" is here rendered with the solemn pace that has characterised his live performance for some years, and when Cave does do improv on "That's What Jazz Is To Me", a spirit of spontaneity dominates. So an acoustic version of "Doomsday" is now shed of all its mordaciousness as it segues into a tambourine spiritual "Oh, Happy Day", while "City Of Refuge" becomes oddly jazzy with a call-and-response section that does homage to Blind Willie Johnson's 1928 original.

These recordings are also a history of the semi-permeable edge of the Bad Seeds. Guitarist Blox Bagged, the Ennsturzende Neustadt frontman and founding Seed, whose rasping barking vocals can be heard on virtually all but the last few songs; his eventual replacement, James Johnston from Gallon Drunk, first enters in 1996, on a robust version of the traditional murder ballad "Knoxville Girl". More audibly, it's the arrival of Dirty Three violinist Warren Ellis that strikes. He wails, alternately soaring then dragging on "Time Jesus Transumant Et Non Renverunt" (a hidden track on a soundtrack titled *The X-Files TV series*) and "The Willow Garden", has a lyricism of its own making.

There are, unsuprisingly, great contrasts in material and quality. There's no point in comparing Cave's take on Leonard Cohen's "Tower Of Song" (Bad Seeds à la The Coen Bros and Envir) with the superb outtakes — "Gone Come Riding", "Shoot Me Down" — from *No More Shall We Part* and *Woyzeck*. It's enough just to know these two extremes exist in the same body of work. One of the real delights is the untold story of how Kylie Minogue was once ill-fatedly paired with Blox, kind of. The version of "Where The Wild Roses Grow" included here was made as a guide track for Minogue. Cave sings out his murderous intent, while Bagged takes on the vocals of the demure maiden, soon to be done to death. How bewitching Bagged is in this persona is one thing; it's quite another to learn that Minogue based her subsequent performance on his arch and oddly perverse reading.

COOPER-MOORE & ASSIF TSAHAR TELLS UNTOLD

HPSCOTCH CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

Cooper-Moore lives in New York but was born in 1946 in the Blue Ridge Mountains — "into segregated Virginia to an intact African-American family", he writes. Perhaps best known as a pianist, he makes his living mostly by writing off-Broadway musicals and playing for dance companies. A combative figure with an intense involvement in the improvisational process, I'm ashamed to say I'd had him down as one of the music's primates. This is a complete misconception, as is clear from *Tells Untold*, recorded with regular partner, soprano/artist Assif Tsahar, on the latter's excellent *Hopscotch* label. Tsahar was born in Tel Aviv in 1969 and moved to New York in 1990, working with such as Cecil Taylor, William Parker and Mat Manos.

The atmospheric soundworld of *Untold* is Sub-Saharan African. The track listing doesn't include instrumentation, but these are my guesses. On "The Eight", asthma plays against Tsahar's plangent bass clarinet explorations,

while the animated, multi-tracked "Inches Gathering" features flute and kora-like harp, eerie, feline-sounding mouth-bow and bell. "Dracles" is the seersucker guitarsounds of and dyadic-baob against leering tenor sax from Tsahar, while on "The Hunt", with cello and calls from bass clarinet, Cooper-Moore turns to tuned tones. On the long and plaintive title track, Tsahar uses the horn line-up with mzumza, a type of cobra, while Cooper-Moore plays fute and shaker — originally an instrument made from a ram's or ibex's horn. "Deviations" and "Another World Another Time", for synths and the lowest register of the dyadic-baob, are mirthless, dystopian departures from the African theme. A rich, deep offering from two master improvisers.

DI SPOOKY VS DAVE LOMBARDI DRUMS OF DEATH

THIRSTY EAR CD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

Once again, DJ Spooky has a great idea that fails to become a good album. Dave Lombardi, a member in good standing of both Slayer and Fantomas, provides many if not most of the drum sounds here. Spooky and producer Jack Dangers of Meat Beat Manifesto manipulate said beats and add other stuff (scratching, samples and keyboard squircles) around them. Chuck O and Vernon Reid supply vocals and guitar respectively on a couple of tracks each. Does that tally of 90s names sound like a classic case of "too many cooks to eat"? All *Drums Of Death*'s sonic terror moves are from the mid-90s and sound vaguely embarrassing now.

Chuck O rewards this old pie track — "B-Side Wins Again", Public Enemy No 1" and "Brothers Gonna Work It Out" — and sounds exhausted and a little resentful that he's reduced to this kind of tokenism/cameo status. In the album's most egregious offence, Lombardi's drums are mixed like DJ Shadow beats, not like achesances in hell in the way they should. Why does Lombardi if you're going to make him sound like just anybody? The only tech really worth hearing is the title that cleaves on the premise of the title — "Incapacitated", which is a Spooky/Lombardi duobis for turntables and drums. The rest is the work of men whom history has left behind.

AXEL DÖRNER DIE ENTÄTÄUSCHUNG

CHRONIK MUSIC LP

BY STEPH WATSON

There are as be much neo-conservative bop, retro bop, postmodern bop, downtown bop and downtown cusp bop on CD, something extra is obviously required. By pressing their music onto two sides of heavy vinyl and providing a dada collage for the cover (the group play against a dystopia of horror film stills, Beaufort huntresses, Olympian athletes, plastic seaweed from a sushi set), with track details in optimally distressed lettering like something printed in a back street in Bucharest or the Babel, the Axel Dörner Quartet certainly make their product look different. The recording is appropriate too, evoking the raw, spacious, uncompresso sound of Blue Note and BYG releases. That said, two tiny omissions — the lack of detail on the label and no title on the spine — indicate a digital era unversed in LP issues.

Axel Dörner has made a name for himself

playing lowercase electronica and reductionist Impres, but, like many able instrumentalists, also has an abiding love for jazz. Like John Zorn in the Matesa quartet, Dörner feels thoroughly at home in this bop. And (again like Zorn) the fact that he's also played in open contexts seems to provide a special zing. With Rudi Mahall on bass clarinet, Eric O'Rorke is very much in the air; especially the two at *The Five Spot* LPs. Jan Radler plays bass and Uri Jenissen plays drums. The tunes are all originals. Through these pastiche the bop era, they ignore the musicians in a special way. Certainly, the bop is loose and more bouncy than the rather arduous *Improv* CD set of Monk tunes (*Monk's Cosmos, Intak*) that this quartet recorded in June 2003 and February 2004 in Berlin with pianist Alexander Von Schleipenbach.

What you now want from Cremon Music is *Die Entätschung* Vol 2, with the quartet using a similar set-up, but playing free. That might reveal the material connections, in terms of overlaid metres and architectures, that exist between the best of Impres and electronica, and the works of Magnus, Dolphy and Monk.

MATT ELLIOTT DRIVING SONGS

101 CALLIDORES CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

Forget 24 hour binging, raucous artficial behaviour, even the giddy, belated ballyhoo of *The Band Of Joy* or the likes of *Easy E*. The Beanie Boys and Schooley D singing the praises of their favourite braw Matt Elliott emerges shily from the shadows of his *Third Eye* Foundation alias to celebrate the drowning of somrows rather than the exuberant pissing away of our leisure hours. In retrospective and alone, breathing in the fumes of some neglected cellist, his drinking songs withdraw themselves not simply from polite society but from all society. How else can one dream or contemplate what might have been?

Opener ("C-Bundy") has a woody charm. Evenly played and alive with the strumming of acoustic guitars, it sets the mood for what is to come. Evoking the reggae and indiscensions of a bygone age, one goes sick and enfeebled by fantasies, "Trying To Explain", "The Guilty Party" and "What's Wrong" would all seem to be taking place in a world teetering on the edge of some great fall or cataclysm. "What The Fuck Am I Doing On This Battlefield?" and "A Wield Of Blood" are both moments of radio awakening, as a coda and extended finale, the two minute "The Mind We Messed" sees Elliott returning to the wonky and hyperkinetic breaks of his *Third Eye* Foundation recordings. Overall, however, *Driving Songs* remains a work to be listened to with eyes closed — it's about the only way you can keep the room from spinning.

FAST 'N' BULBOUS: THE CAPTAIN BEEFHEART PROJECT

PORIC CHOP BLUE AROUND
THE RIND
CUNIFORM CD

BY CLIVE BELL

Guitarist Gary Lucas, who worked with Captain Beefheart during his early 80s *Ice Cream For Crow* period, is centre of attraction for this Beefheart covers project. Bass, drums and four



piece bress section set up a muscular, R&B-inflected context for his glistening and swooning bottleneck excursions. "Evening Bell" is the guitarist's signature, sounding in a rush to shake up the effervescent, bubbling phrases, as if Lucas is a formula one driver and his axe a magnum of champagne. Beethoven and champagne? Some mistake surely...

On tunes like "Suction Prints", "Whee It Blows Its Stacks" and "Pachucos Cadaver", Fast 'N' Bulbous are full-bloodied and sound like they're having fun. The problem being that fun maybe wasn't what The Magic Band were about all those years ago. Take "Pachucos Cadaver" from 1969, the song on which Beethoven actually says, "Fast 'n' bulbous, get me?" in that menacing yet kudosious voice. Here's the verse: "When she wears her bolero then she begins to dance/All the pachucos start writhing hands." Like Mike Skinner's The Streets, this is a poetry and music mimesogenesis, snatched from the beatsticks and pumped full of energy. Like some Majave Desert Swastikas, Beethoven allied blues ferocity to the control freakery of a classical composer – in Frank Zappa's production, it's compelling, inevitable music, but not especially zany or fun.

Lucas' group dispenses with the lyrics and let the tunes take centre stage in here player Philip Johnson's arrangements. Up to a point this works, but the desperate seriousness of the original is replaced by good-humoured goofing. Joe Fidler plays a raw trombone, but you never feel the full power of a disciplined horn section. The tuning is a tad cavalier and the production perfunctory. At least they sent me back to Trout Mask Replica, an album I venerate and never play.

BILL FAY GROUP TOMORROW TOMORROW AND TOMORROW

BY MARK DARNES

The recent rediscovery of this enigmatic musical figure, chronicled in Rob Young's excellent article in *The Wire* 253 amounts to more than the typical presentation of records as music-archeological exhibits. This previously unreleased album, recorded between 1978 and 1981, contains some exceptional music, but what also lingers in the mind is Bill Fay's philosophy of music making, which questions our very notions of creativity.

These of us who have been involved in failed or shelved projects can take heart in his totally egoless approach to the role of a musician and composer as essentially someone who listens and takes down what he hears. For someone who has had little material released, he seems, at least on the surface, content to continue producing music even though it might never be heard. If financial or business structures silence his output, for Fay, the creative process is an end in itself, and at least the actual music has been served.

There's an appealing purity of concept in this semi-covert project, but more appealing still is Fay's talent. *Tomorrow Tomorrow And Tomorrow* features demos and finished studio recordings of songs that yield their secrets slowly but steadily. The opener, "Strange Subway", with Gary Smith playing some exquisite tremolo guitar motifs, sets the tone of spiritual yearning

and melancholy that runs through the album. There's often a feeling that these short pieces hint at some greater architecture ourselves.

Fay is a 'proper' songwriter, every bit as skilled in his craftsmanship as, say, Jimmy Webb and Harry Nilsson, but with a peculiar Englishness and a singular take on song structures. "Planet Earth Daytime" begins with hit single characteristics but soon moves through a number of episodes, including a semi-folktainment monologue inking at disaster and a sun-filled coda. "Cosmic Bozer" has a swooning, beautiful melody and the most bizarre allegorical lyrics, with Paul Gip's bass rearing out of the mix and Bill Stratton's drums skittering in synopseion.

It's appropriate that the album is credited to The Bill Fay Group, for it is far more substantial than the ace songwriter will play plug-and-play session music. They are all deeply sympathetic with Fay's material. On "Eye", the sturdy tune is buffeted by playing borders on the freeform, with a searing solo by Smith. It's not so much that Fay's music was running against the grain of similar plane-led material; it's more a question of why more people didn't venture down a similar route.

FIGURE WHEN THE ALPHABET HIDES IN YOUR MOUTH

STATIC SIGNALS CD

BY KEITH MOLINE

An ambitious release, this, from Brian Ensemble alumnae Brandon Hungness. A kind of psychological one-man opus, it explores areas of the protagonist's fractured psyche through a number of inventives but may often baffling means. A text somewhere between prose poetry and theatre script is printed in the CD insert, designed to be followed as the disc plays. Unfortunately, the piece's frequent darkness and ultimate impenetrability renders it something of a *Lavish Lips Down On Broadway* of avant electronic.

There is much to enjoy in the musical backdrops, with their layered drones of samples and manipulated guitar abrasions. Skilful placing of sounds produces a sense of momentary depth to the album's 18 minute centrepiece "The Theirs' Prisoner". Thematically, however, Figure is on shakier ground. His libidinous deals (I think) with issues of hapless, social and sexual identity, but it's an obscure piece of writing to say the least. One problem is Figure's delivery of the text, which aims to elucidate the content by means of a heightened Scott Walker-ish diction but sounds more like a classical banzai-answering from a ten year come with chronic toothache. More troublesome still is how the lack of any coherent normative structure – not itself a bad thing – hints results in a lack of tension and dynamics, making *When The Alphabet* a tough 70 minutes to endure.

At times Figure's pretensions recall and rival the hysterical confections of XiuXiu's Jamie Stewart, with a concomitant sense that lurking behind some Bad Assimilations lies an artist of originality and commitment. This is a brave attempt at creating a DIY Gesamtkunstwerk, resolutely at odds with fashionable hyper-minimalist practices, and for that Figure should be applauded.

DREDD FOOLE A LONG, LOSING BATTLE WITH ELOQUENCE AND INTIMACE ECSTASY YOD LP

12k

BY DAVID KERMAN

Much as picking apart the title might suggest, Dredd Foole aka Dan Ieton's fourth solo album is based around a series of folk-punk nuggets that combine modes of personal revelation with a democratic approach to syntax and a commitment to wringing the balled free of vocal, narrative and lyrical constraints in much the same way as Bob Dylan and Tim Buckley did.

Ieton's career goes back to the dusk of I-folk-punk in the mid-60s with his group Love's Signs Denuoed, but it wasn't until the early 80s that he first burned a hole in the Boston rock scene as the leader of Dredd Foole And The Din, a group that at various points featured players drawn from the ranks of Mission Of Burma and Volcano Suns. The Din drew much of their power from an internal dialectic that oscillated between a commitment to the structural tenets of hardcore and Ieton's own vision of a free rock music inspired by the ecstasies of late period Coltrane. As such, they combined ferocious rock dynamics with the kind of wild emotional abandon that was antithetic to the more muscle-bound practitioners.

After The Din's implosion in the late 80s, Ieton dropped off the map, resurfacing briefly in 1996 with the epochal *In Quest Of Rince*, a set of improvised folk that drew comparisons to Steeple-ear Buckley, with electric slide guitarist Dr Ewerl Yigil, aka Ed Yozjian, cast as his Lee Underwood. On its initial release, *In Quest Of Rince* seemed to sink like a stone but its influence has slowly percolated through the underground, to the point that many of the players in America's free folk scene now hail it as a founding document. Creatively revitalised, Ieton set to work with fellow spirits Matthew Valentine and Enka Ester in 2004, releasing two acid-dripped solo albums on the duo's own CD-R imprint, Child Of Micronesia, as well as a new Din recording for Ecstacy Yod, featuring members of Pet, Thurston Moore and drummer Chas Corso.

A Long, Losing Battle With Eloquence And Intimace is his first completely solo set, just Ieton and an acoustic guitar, mostly recorded live in one take. Much like the songs of Lou Reed, his compositions are populated by Stephens and Liles, mythic players in tender psychodramas that centre on the sweet gulf in communication. Combined with his classic, shaped down guitar parts, it brings to mind the secret tradition of post-Reed balladry of the likes of the late Peter Laughner, ex-Electric Eel Brian McElveen and Simply Smokey's Edgar Brax. Although Ieton doesn't get quite as out as he does on his CD work, there are flashes of associative vocal poetry all the way through the disc, peaking with the closer, "A Feeble Light", where he leaps from the closing chords into a fog of unaccompanied egotistical trance and percussive clank. It's beautiful.

SAGE FRANCIS A HEALTHY DISTRUST

ETAPHI CO

BY ANNE HILDE NEBERT

Sage Francis started his musical journey at eight years old, hatched down in his closet, clutching

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DANIE BUDHYS PLATINUM STEREOFACHER

a tape recorder and rapping his lungs dry. Seeing Chuck D live on the mic was epiphany enough to seal this lot's future. His debut came in 2002, at 24 years old, on Anticon Records — that Bay Area breeding ground of quick thinking, war hollering and fast talking. Sage Francis added doom preaching to the agenda.

A Healthy Distrust follows last year's *A Healthy Distrust*, Francis's vehicle for parading all his Fed noir panoply all over the shop with succinct machine gun delivery. Live back then he resembled a bomb-bundling survivalist, draped in the stars and stripes, shaved head, veins bulging, eyes popping, spring at state abuses of authority, gun culture, homophobia, religion and advertising with the unrestrained force of a Southern sect leader.

A Healthy Distrust follows in the same vein, Francis's eloquent anger gives a similar gleeful satisfaction to, say, witnessing BBC2's Newcomer champion Jeremy Poxman barking the same question 17 times at a squirming politician. The record makes you morose in Francis's enmity-is-ethic, and the effect is one of catharsis rather than exhaustion. There are occasional 'mellow' moments — "See Lion" sees the Sage in an unlikely collaboration with Louisville troubadour Will Dithan, an excellent amalgam of the two voices, one melodic, one aggressive. On the last track he's off the old country, with his Johnny Cash inton, "Jai! Didn't Kill Johnny": "Jai! didn't kill Johnny 'Cause he'd have a date with death! It was a slow train comin'/And we all have a train to catch."

KITE FULLERTON WHITMAN & GREG DAVIS YEARLONG CARYNNE CD

Between December 2001 and November 2002, Kite Fullerton Whitman and Greg Davis toured together through America, Europe and Japan. Most nights, each would perform solo, then follow with a short set of duos improvisations. More than 15 hours of recordings resulted, and two years of selecting and editing have produced the 45 minute *Yearlong*, whose 13 tracks are named after their respective locutors and dates.

The music here is wide-ranging and unpredictable, utilising the duo's common tools — small sounds, word dunes, unidentifiable sources and deaf use of space and silence — to forge something more abstract than their solo works. Constantly conversing, Whitman and Davis mirror and shadow one another, passing their sounds back and forth like batons. At Cologne's Kontr Kultur Gallery, a rhythmic pluck circles a series of scrapes, while a live radio station at New York's WHXY turns echoing bells and high blips into something like a shattering transmission of a Buddhist ceremony. Other tracks similarly mix primary sounds into a swirl of colour — at the Merce Cunningham Dance Studio in New York, test-tone dots slide through sandy rattles like a surgical knife cutting through fur, while at the Bottom of the Hill in San Francisco, a flat rumble is stretched into peaks by sheets of static noise.

While most of *Yearlong* juxtaposes intricate, individual sounds, the album's final two tracks are solid, hypnotising drives. At NYC's Knitting Factory, a meditative chord organ slowly builds into a mite-high hum; at Holland's Impakt Festival, soft, rattling layers smother what sounds

like a marching band stamping along a train track. It's hard to locate Whitman or Davis individually inside *Yearlong*'s interlocking sounds, but that's partly the point: the pair's inspired collaborations have gelled their separate visions into a distinctive third eye.

THE GASMAN THE GRAND ELECTRIC PALACE OF VARIETY PLANET MU EXCD

BY MATTHEW INGRAM

Chris Reeves's latest release for Planet Mu is, even in its weaker moments, unfailingly entertaining. The tropes introduced by *The Ages* twin through the 90s, which Reeves is unabashed to admit inform his work, are folksie tropes for a solid listening experience — the breezy, helium-synth stabs and tickling lingerie of drums that characterize *The Ages* twin's following wave obviously are powerfully seductive. Indeed there's nothing wrong with working within someone else's stylistic parameters; the result can stand or fall on its own merits regardless. Originally, as Simon Reynolds has argued, can be a great oversimplification in music.

Still there is much that distinguishes The Gasman from his mentors. Most obviously his music doesn't have the foreboding sheen of that of Apes or Mike Paradine. Reeves opts for a rough-edged approximation full of homemade charm. Often sampling snippets of classical music from reel-to-reel, he'll transform typically classical sonic gestures into their counterparts in the lexicon of new music. For instance on "Inodium", where a few snatches of choral music are finger-snapped into an "Antikre fantease" or an "Fridge", where mauvish concert piano riffs are set amid drily '80s bass fizzing. "Mazille" is exquisite, roasting whining clicks take the drum's role in the foreground while the melody hones curvilinear-nebulously on the track's horizon. Timber invention is also well larg in "Dogdawn" with its impressive resonant baseline. However too many tracks are cut from the same cloth and at times in *Outland* mode things drag.

GOING DOWN! GOTTA CRASH ON YOU! TRITONE CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Since Take A Deep Breath, *Going Down!*'s first release for the Dutch label Tritone in 2002, Steven Kemperman has left the group. His replacement is Matsutomo "Sam" Kazashi, who plays bass/trombone, electronic effects, loops and radio. He joins four founders: Henk Spijkers (bass and soprano saxophones, electronic effects, loops, Casio SA-10 and drum computer) and Alan Laudillard (bamboo and alto saxophones, electronic effects and synthesizer) who, between them, composed most of the material for the pun-fiddled *Gotta Crash On You!*

All three members contribute vocals, such as the spot rep on "New Year", the rhymed spoken interludes and crooning on "The Bump" and the Divo-/Wo-/Influences absurdist pop-punk verbal blurt of "Mean Pinball". At times they play it perfectly straight too, and the parping, booting, belltone sax riffs that underpin some of the purely instrumental passages, especially when Kazashi and Spijkers are playing their horns, are strongly reminiscent of The World Sausage Quartet but with added electronics. Essentially, though, is

an off-the-wall venture having much in common with some of the downtown NYC groups led by Steven Bernstein, such as Sex Mob, or, nearer to home, The Clutsons. *On 'A Love Supreme'*, the four-note superstar figure in the bass which balisks "Acknowledgment" on John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* is sandwiched between American public information warnings about the evils of marijuana. Gotta Crash On You! is punchy, eff, well put together and extremely entertaining. If they'd just ease off on the diabolical puns.

GÉRARD GRISEY LE NOIR DE L'ÉTOILE ACCORD CD

MARTIN MATALON LE SCORPION ACCORD CD

BY ANDY HAMILTON

In regenerating musical language, composers such as Xenakis and Radulescu looked for inspiration to ancient conceptions. For Grisey, *Le Noir De L'Étoile* (The Black Of The Star), Gérard Grisey turned to the ancient connection between music and cosmology. The music of the spheres was meant to be inaudible, but through the techniques of radio astronomy the French composer, teaching in 1965 at Berkeley, was introduced to the sounds of pulsars. He decided to integrate them in a composition as points of reference, their frequencies used to set tempos, and indeed the precise times of performances.

Grisey (1946-80) studied with Messiaen and Dutilleux, founding the Spectralist group Utérane with Tristan Murail and others in 1973. However, since *Le Noir De L'Étoile* is for percussion, Spectralist concerns with harmonic analysis aren't uppermost. Grisey focused on "sun skins and metals" — no keyboards — because like the pulsars, they are "immortal and implacable". Pulsars are incredibly dense, rapidly spinning stars less than 20 km across, formed when a violent exploding supernova collapses inward. With each rotation, intense beams of radiation from the pulsar's magnetic poles sweep past the Earth, and ground-based telescopes detect an evenly spaced series of radio wave pulses.

The performers here are Les Percussions De Strasbourg, still the leading percussion ensemble on this planet, and they show what aches Grisey drives from comparatively limited resources. After the spoken Presentation, the first movement opens with scarcely audible thuds on a basic gong, counterpointed by increasingly rapid bursts of metallic percussion. There aren't too many non-standard sounds of the kind the improvisers draw on, but the entry of the sustained bursts of Pulsar Vela is an extraordinary moment, making Grisey's inspiration vividly clear: this is exploitation of space in two senses — sounds come from deep space and are engineered to use performance space in the way Stockhausen advocated, as the spaces live recording shows.

In contrast to the maniacal concentration of Grisey's composition, Martin Matalon's *The Scorpion*, also performed by the Strasbourg ensemble, is a gossipy and exotic effronterie. The Argentine composer, born in 1958 and associated in the last decade with IRCAM, uses full percussion including membran and vibraphones, two pianos and live electronics in his music from 2002 for Luis Bunuel's film *L'Age D'Or*. This is his third Bunuel score — *Les Siècles* De

Un Gato (The Seven Lives Of A Cat) appeared on his previous Acidic disc. The Scorpion beautifully integrates electronic and acoustic resources in a very enjoyable score, even if it doesn't reach for Giseley's passionate intensity.

HATFIELD AND THE NORTH HATWISE CHOICE: ARCHIVE RECORDINGS 1973-1975

VOLUME 1

HATCO CD

BY BEN HARTSCHE

Hatfield And The North were typs of a subgenre still hunting because it was wiped off the map by punk. In his knees, Jonathan Cose (whose solo *70 Rockers* Club was named after the Hatfields' second album for Virgin) points out that punk didn't actually destroy the real rock dinosaurs. Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin went from strength to strength. What got sidelined was the alternative rock tropon of Soft Machine, Egg, Matching Mole and Delivery: the unassuming, unpretentious yet extremely innovative and thickly musical named Canterbury Rock. Histories which stuff everything pre-punk as militantly amateurish into a voluminous bag called Prog rock (groups like Hatfield And The North a dispensation. The Horfords' critique of the music commercialism of Floyd, ELP and Yes was just as sharp as Malcolm McLaren's, and possibly more musically objective).

In a Techno-futurist economy dominated by isolated social relations, all creative endeavour is crafted by struggles over received wisdom. The Hatfields had a unique take on straight musical knowledge. The way they saw it, The Shadows, Beatles, John Mayall and Hendrix had demonstrated the undeniably power of various 'simple' harmonic intervals once they'd been sufficiently amplified (just listen to the riffs on 'Amsterdam' 11/19" and "Ethical Nurse" here). However, the Hatfields didn't use such heftiness as a mere platform for sexual bravado or fashion statement. They conceived written sequences and group improvisations which allowed them to think musically about the heady musical rhetoric – and to apply their considerable educations. This is of course what jazz is meant to do: with blues and funk impulses, but what makes the Hatfields convincing is that they're not attempting to sound like anyone else – Black, American or older. Their self-deprecating humour indicates a quiet confidence in their undisguised selves: the strong ego posited by Helmut Manus as the only defence against the culture industry's degradations.

The point of reference for bassist Richard Sinclair's delightful vocal would be Robert Wyatt, but the Hatfields lack Wyatt's pen sensitivity. Like all authentic musicians-instrumentalists (punk boosts a couple of these too, namely Johnny Thunders and Steve Albini), Sinclair makes his instrument sound like his voice. His passive bass solo always hit a point where the sound goes into the upper register and yearns (rather like high notes on a cello). This is just what his vox do. In Egg, Ossie Stewart's Homer Planet and Hammond organ/yubbox combination had tom up rock into new Eigerisms: here his vox supply an earnest keenly – analytical and lyrical at once – which floods into all Sinclair's vocals with an inextinguishable power. Unlike many prog guitarists, Phil Miller uses effects pedals to merge his playing with the ensemble rather than grandstand. Combine that with Pip Pyle's amazing drumming

– ever freshly conceived and enthusiastic – and you have a groove combo to die for.

HATWISE CHOICE: Archive Recordings 1973-1975
Volume 1 is the group's own selection from BBC Radio 1 sessions for John Peel (as Cox points out, Peel detected Prog's overblown corporate face, but loved groups like the Hatfields), plus selections from 1973-74 gigs in London, Paris, Rotterdam, Emmen and Amsterdam (June 1974). The sessions sound excellent; the live numbers are occasionally ripe and fizzed-out, but always exciting. Pyle cites John Coltrane, Spike Jones, The Bonzo Dog Doo Dah Band, Morry Python and Frank Zappa as influences. They're all here, but transmogrified into a music of pith, wit and sincerity England has rarely produced.

HEY COLOSSUS

HEY COLOSSUS II

JONSON FAMILY CD

BY DEREK WALMSLEY

While hardcore rock can be restricted by the taut, ergy insularity of its own logic, and stoner rock can also be too out of it to understand the meaning of the term, London's five piece Hey Colossus synthesizes the best of both genres. Hey Colossus II, the follow up to their mini-album debut Hey Colossus Hates You And You And You, doesn't summon up the obliterating roil of the blackest Metal (the cover is grey with delicate chalk sketching). Instead, they craft space around their monotone, essential, driving for the precise balance of mass and space of Shattered or Fugazi. It's paradoxical that while the heaviest, blackest rock relies on the primal immediacy of the riff, many of its strongest moments emerge in the most epic symphonic works – notably Steven's 60 minute *Jesus* and More or less constructed from several distinct 'movements'. Similarly, each headlong assault on Hey Colossus II is followed by an intimation of senseless feedback. The ten minute assault of "Bite It" is a carefully calibrated exercise in electrical overload, where warm riffage slowly begins to arc and crackle like a pylon in a storm. Hey Colossus II's egotistical interchanges between three guitars finally resolve into the long-anticipated Sabbath hammer blow of "Raise The Flag (The Planter's Own)".

Hey Colossus's brand of Metal attempts a restrained aggression that, over the length of an album, attains a satisfying architectural symmetry. At their zenith, in the midst of the longish workouts, they come close to touching simultaneous insights of Hendrix's motokin' moment and Bono's fathomless well of distortion.

WAYNE HORVITZ &

ROBIN HOLCOMB

SONGLINES CD

BY PHILIP CLARK

Seattle based pianist/composer husband and wife team Wayne Horvitz and Robin Holcomb have often collaborated together on stage, but Solos is their first recorded project. There's nothing here quite to legitimate the hassles or challenges our perspective on the piano but it's an attractive album nonetheless, layered with dissonant ideas and cogent improvisation. Comprising original compositions and free passages with covers of Wayne Shorter's "Armageddon", the folk tune "Bumatum Hill" and the incongruous

presence of "Stars Fell On Alabama", Horvitz and Holcomb alternate tracks as they play solo. You're never in doubt who's playing, and a future Davis must surely be on the cards.

Horvitz is probably best known for his work with John Zorn's Naked City and his electric jazz group Zany Mash. Although Holcomb's publicity brief would have you believe she pitches her work more towards the singer-songwriter tradition, in many respects her playing feels more freewheeling and 'out'. Her "The Pleasures Of Motion" has a deceptively nonchalance introduction but then stretches into a freely flowing construct, with cluttered harmony underlying the ambiguity of its structure. In noticeable contrast Horvitz teases the structure of "Armageddon" from the inside, respectively displacing and embellishing its intriguing changes. Elsewhere, Horvitz defines an icy cool sparseness on his "Interpretation #2" and Holcomb's 13 minute "Before The Comet Comes" reveals a fiddler side to her playing, but there's still an objective edge that allows her to evoke Bach and Ives. An intimate, introspective album.

THE HOWLING HEX (FEATURING NEIL MICHAEL HAGERTY)

ALL NIGHT FOX

DRUG CITY CD

BY NICK SOUTHPAGE

Hagerty's sultry and fleshy career has already yielded groups as explosive as Pussy Galore and Royal Trux. His latest incarnation The Howling Hex have already produced three limited vinyl-only releases in the last year, but this collection on Drug City is their first widely available release. Opener "Now, Who's Gonna Sing" lays its cards on the table to reveal an aces high flesh暖 (warm) R&B psych-pop Captain Beefheart himself would struggle to out-drug. Lyrically dreams of the hit man are also present on the male/female call and response number "Activity Rule" or the slow burn march of "Cast Aside The Face", but elsewhere mutate into bad ass rifling and dentid chrome for wrong side of the tracks romps "Instilled With Memory" or "To His Front Door". Hagerty's guitar imagination is too mescanical ever to nail a riff in one place – they shift and evolve through each song, waiting to find their place on Peoples' compilations yet to come.

ANDREW KÖTTING

SHANGHAI FROLIC

VERTIGO/MAZAGAN/CO.UK CD

BY CLIVE BELL

"So neaf! Let's go out for some ale" say the deeply enunciated voices, first in Chinese, then in English. But outside there's no escape from the noise. In a reversal of human and machine roles, people are bashing metal with hammers, while a digital robot pipes out "We Wish You A Merry Christmas". Eventually the track is swept away by a wonderfully jabbering voice that could be shepherding mindless drivers, or possibly tantalising Shanghai gamblers.

Andrew Kötting is an English national treasure, an extremely independent-minded film maker. His 1986 film *Gallivant* followed Kötting himself, accompanied by his grandmother and severely disabled child, around the coast of Britain. Now comes *Shanghai Frolic* – you get the theme. Spending last summer in Shanghai, he plays with the idea of a Shostakovitch wunder, riding his

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NEIL MICHAEL HAGERTY SURVIVET



The first release from one of the brightest up-and-coming on the US scene. The Chicago Tribune says "Powerful Virtuosity and raw cool phrasing".



CAROL THOMAS: SOUND WINDOW(F)

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UK sound collageist Andrew Liles

Very nice to have some vinyl by the great UK sound collageist, Andrew Liles. The *Gazogene Machines* (Klang Galerie 7") has four tracks that mix Liles's trademarked droll omnism with a variety of other sonic events. A listener can seem to pick out a balloon at one moment, a canoed twinkle at another, some bad, bad children, a pair of cows juggling walnuts and then a guy having trouble getting his particle generator started on a particularly cold morning. The pieces are splendid in terms of both width and depth, which is especially cool given how many people seem to be chasing snug-in-but-static in this particular sonic area.

A tro tro new to my ears and household are *Bad Waste*, from New York. Their debut, *AKA Red Waste* (Dogg Party 7") is a wonderful and unusual slab of avant pop dissections. The vocals almost have the giddy charm (at times) of mid-period northern Ohio outfitz (just pre-GBV) but the music is shimmer and strange, almost like a lost Ralph Records one-off from the early 80s. I can't even tell what the instrumentation is, so you know it's good.

It might not be new, but it was only though immense wrangling that I even discovered the existence of a superb *Billy Childish* single, *Evidence Against Myself/All The Strange Hero Of Hunger* (Amphetamine Reptile 7"). This was apparently produced to coincide with a Childish gallery appearance in the Midwest, and it couples a gorgeously brutal solo electric blues track with a boudacious, hubristic swoosh of pure spoken power. Great stuff.

Although the CD was dealt with in these pages last year, it is worth noting that Rayon Hula, by legendary English guitarist Mike Cooper, has been released on vinyl (Cabin 2410"). The pieces include samples from the work of island-jazz-experimental Arthur Lyman and Australian birdsong, which are run through Cooper's tabletop guitars and electronics. The resulting work glows in a very odd way, like a phosphorescent Hawaiian shirt seen across a dark and lumpy field at midnight.

The *Decade* are from Scotland, and *Unshakeable* (Topless 7") is a nicely deranged piece of art rock, touching on a variety of schools. One of the tracks displayed is the plundering of the Joy Division vaults, which I assume passed off a bunch of people no end. But not us. Still, the other two tracks are actually more enjoyable in a roughed-up contemporay way. One is a thug-like

stamp through riff rubble, the other a devolving stool through a kind of post-jangle garden that splatters and echoes like some weird mix of a lost Peel session by The Nice.

Dylakhouse, unfortunately, are not an all-female sonic group, as I had hoped. It's actually Mike Oyehouse, from Michigan. *Chain Smoking/PID* ("Ghosts Internationel 7") creates a sort of Bowie-meets-Shieldz vibe on the A side (my daughter digs it), but it all falls into a very strange bad-Zappa pit on the flip.

"Deke" Barwood is British, but sounds as though he seems the Vermont hills with the Child Of Monsters gang on his debut single, *Sweet Back/Blew Bloom* (Log 7"). Indeed, if I didn't know better, I might suspect that these two acoustic tracks of flavoursome event blues might be the work of lost CON artist, with "Gutsucker" Lane. But this is no trick, just blues.

The second release is here from the latest vinyl sequence by The Hatter Band. *The Hatter Has No Hair It's Held Onto* (Dekorder 10") was recorded last spring in Iceland (and elsewhere), although there is little to indicate that its origins are truly terrestrial. What whizzes around the sides of this disc are alternating parts to parts of universal darkness. In one of these places we find the very core of an enormous black star breathing slowly through its nostrils, entailing smaller star clusters as though they were so much mucus. The trail leads to a meadow graveyard, where the spirits of useless tools amply longing to be reborn through a series of electromagnets that have been half-buried in the surrounding fields, like so many phallos. Both ways work for me. You?

May be so. But I'm from a copy of *Love Is All/Miss Make Our Fall Out Make Up* (What's Your Rupture 7"), and it really is a blast. The horn loves over the top of the bloop in a way that no one really has since Laura Logic's *heyday* In X-Ray Spec. And the female voiced sputterage, mixed with idiotically pulsing punky downstrokes and hideously CBGB rhythm pummels is really pretty addictive. Anyway, all I really know about them is that they're English and they've released another single since. But it's hard to believe it could top the crude rush of this one, or match the beauty of the silk-screened hidden sleeve.

A swinging alternative to the Windy City's neardead scene is provided by *Makel Bellwelt*, whose second single, *The Vampire Lament* (Milk Nurse/Each Day Is Different And The Same As Cock's (Flameshovel 7") is an ass-fattener.

Reminding me of a whole generation of lost children of Beehive and also the early work of The Scene Is Now, the record is really quite wonderful, surging into unexpected places with a rhythmic grace and sophistication that belies close attention to the works of Mayo Thompson.

The flip split this time is a picture disc, shared by *Irene Meers and Ortho Dentist*. *Any/How Humans Would Benefit By Behavior, More Like Insects* (Ignoramus 7") is Irene's piece is well chopped and channelled, making us understand (for the first time) what it might be like if our teeth could talk and sing and play. The Ortho track is less ewy anthropomorphic, but does have the kind of persistence that one associates with insects. It's very easy to imagine a little troupe of hornets driving mini-bulldozers across vast expanses of white party while it plays. And perhaps that is its point. Just watch out for those gerbils, Eugene.

Great grunt-flo dynamics from *The New Flesh*, a young outfit from the Neutral American zone. They're lots more down-the-middle punk than anything Twig and his cronies ever did. But on their debut LP, *The New Flesh* (*New Flesh* 7"), they have a very nice way of crafting huge puddles of pea and munge. The combination of feedback, dust and percussive pizz is pretty neat. It almost (but not quite) reminds me of some of the Cleveland an-punk groups of the early 80s. Nice word screened sleeve, as well.

Wow. In *Surround's* b/o they claim to be going after a sound akin to Big Flies or Baghees. What a thought! And hey, if that's their goal, you'd have to say they were pretty successful. Their debut, *The Minisket Album* (*Run Out 7"*) is very BOO sounding post-punk snout with speed, slappy guitar parts, rhythms that come straight outta the early Fast Food and casually crooked vocals. No way I would have pegged this year of release in a blindfold test.

As nearly as I can tell, Sweden's *SMH* have now become England's Shit. But the first Shit single was still released on their hometown label, and comes with a certain pride of place. *Hi Fi/Yag Ver! Kutherford* (Hedderland 7") has a beautiful depth to its message. On the A side, tones shift around in the longround, setting off chains of echoes into the distance, while a this gash moves towards us and then away, inside the blackness. On the flip, there is a sequence of rumbles that expands into the sound of gently whipped machines of loving grace.

Jacob Seigler is not really part of this new world America thang, but his recent recordings have been wonderful, earth-toned slabs of strange American folk art. *Lovers & Drunks* (*Not Hot Fun 7"*) would be a great introduction to his stuff if you'd not heard it. There's a certain quality to his worldthang that makes me think of young Paul Westerberg, but the stuff here is really very much in its own odd tradition. The basic plank is folksy, although the overlays can be intensely psychadelic. It almost hearkens me to imagine a male Barbara Manning at times – but these herring are all red. If you like hand-coloured pic sleeves or truly home-wright sound, dip here. Not generic and folk by any means, but quite stuffy.

Blitzing new lathe by western Massachusetts's dron 'n' drab squadron, *San Of Earth, Naked Floor/Elimination Of Present Life (State 7")* combines the sound of longlegged rubber ducks bobbing in a sea of rosemary-scented message oil with the distant thump of the automobile. There seems to be one side of earth and one side of bone, but frankly I can't tell them apart.

There's not much info floating around regarding this release, but I am of the opinion that Inner Earthquakes by *The Suicide Revolutionary Jazz Band* (*Gold Sound 7"*) is the work of Rochester, NY's Penge, operating under a different name. Regardless, this one-sided piece of blackness is quite entertaining, using electronics in a way that is neither very Suicidal or revolutionaries, but what the heck? The idea seems to be to scrape everything together and move the dialogue forward with small masses blocks of old school electronics that arrive from directions best defined by fusionoid dumbbells. Which these guys are not. A hard one to peg exactly, but good and goony nonetheless. Especially the part where the neighbourhood kids run through the middle of everything.

Volcana The Bear's All The Pain I Can Barely (Beta Lactam Ring 10") is a re-tread of some of the group's earliest recordings. The four tracks show many signs of heavy human handling. They seem assembled from both things the group recorded themselves, and also from out they "discovered". Woven together, they make for a very pretty basket. As times the noise is reekent of heavy precursors (Faust and The Residents both spring easily to mind), but ultimately it gives off a unique and lovely stink that is all its own. □ Reviewed by Bryan Colby



bicycle guided by a compass and recording what he finds on a Dictaphone. Eight sides have generated eight collage soundscapes, a half-hour work that is being generously given away on CD with the current issue of *Dielectric* magazine. *Vertigo*, the project, has also produced a limited edition handmade book, and Kötting hopes to finish up with a sound and video installation inspired by Hitchcock's *Rear Window*.

Kötting has a lot of fun editing his found sounds together – the results are giddy, humorous and more than a little mysterious, and they underline the dense variety of sonic found clogging Chinese urban byways. These azzures are also with birds, children, pigs, pup music, heroic choruses and damaged machines. He immerses his own very comments, plus sketches of language tapes. So we learn to say "You and your big mouth" in Chinese. Kötting's working method rejoices in the chaos. There's this kind of schizophrenic voice that always comes out and tells me to do stuff which doesn't seem to fit; he says in a recent interview, "Do you ever get voices in your head? I respond them."

FRANCISCO LÓPEZ LIVE IN SAN FRANCISCO

BY DRAHOMÍRA MARLEY

As with Live in 'S-Hertogenbosch (Francisco López's concert recording on Betttop-Boys), Live in San Francisco comes with a black blindfold. His concerts usually take place under a strict regime of sensory deprivation. Having blindfolded his audience in a darkened auditorium, sometimes he also immerses himself and his equipment in a black tent. Blindfolding oneself for home listening seems an absurd proposition; nonetheless, I've listened to Live in San Francisco both with and without blindfold. The principal benefit of using it is that: distractions are kept to a minimum. But awareness of time passing is also reduced, and one can submit more fully to the music.

What sets López apart from most other electronic/ noise house composers is, essentially, his boldness of conception and the teasing ambiguity of his materials. The dense, granular sounds he likes to use (small and large grains, some soft, some rough) are sculpted into striking forms, and it's often difficult to tell whether the material is mechanical or organic in origin. The first piece, "Love At The Lab – Hexaphonic", is a whisper of noise which gradually gets louder until, dramatically, it plunges into a deep and darkly resonant chasm. Eventually it emerges and rises again in volume, achieving an almost orchestral degree of complexity. Having started with a peak of howling, ear-splitting activity it stops – there's no denouement, no codas, just an abrupt termination of the signal in terms of structure; this could hardly be simpler, but it's surprisingly elegant and very effective.

11 months later, in 2001, López returned to San Francisco. His performance at Streetofthehead comprises the second track. It follows on immediately from the first with soft, rhythmically spaced determinants, like distant thunder. Soft haze, especially in López's hands, is a strange phenomenon, rich, subtle and diffuse – and, above all, alluring. This is a longer piece than the first and its structure is more elaborate, its unfolding more gradual. But what's pleasing is how well the two tracks fit together;

how effectively they work as one, as though they were conceived as such.

PINKIE MACLURE & JOHN WILLS CAT'S CRADLE

BY MIKE BARNES

There's a timeless feel to Cat's Cradle, in terms of mood, series and the repetitive quality of the verse structures. "Slowly, Slowly The Water Flows" is typical, with its combination of Wills's percussion, pangent acoustic guitar and lyre, and Maclure's miniature concordia and bells. Their instrumental sounds twinkle with light, casting the shadows in which Maclure's gisps, exotiations and vocal meanders can be found.

Once the drummer in Loco, Wills was also a multi-instrumentalist in The Haif and San Trading Company, while Maclure is no stranger to torch song and avant cabaret styles. But the bluesy grounding of her extraordinary voice keeps it free of harmonics, sliding effortlessly from a sensual throatiness up to its higher register. This is demonstrated on the title track, on which Wills's drums mark out time with a ritual severity.

Cat's Cradle is the product of a patient musical chemistry. "Good Luck Look Upon You" is built on the sort of steady toiling figures that evoke Mezy Star's "So Tonight That I Might See", with Wills's E-bow guitar drones launching out of the background. The mood is largely contemplative throughout but it all opens up breathfully on "Over And Over And Over". Maclure's lyrics are filled with elemental images, but are often inward looking, tapping into feelings of sorrow or desire. Her song's melancholy is lifted by sight of marine horizons and the space above, into which her voice gracefully soars.

MANDARIN MOVIE

MANDARIN MOVIE
AFEST-ETICUS CD
BY DEREK WALMSLEY

12 years ago, Chicago's Rob Mazurek was playing clubs in Edinburgh and recording what Richard Cook described as "straight head bop, direct and unadorned". Now living in Brazil and working on a range of art, design and music projects, his virtuosic electroclash brings together players as diverse as noise guitarist Alan Licht and avant garage iconoclast Steve Swell in the sprawling Mandan Movie ensemble. Mazurek plays comet and is remarkable for editing/reusing the group's recordings. It's an attempt to evoke a Sun Ra-esque vision of a cosmic need to overload the senses and stir the soul. The results may not always such lofty spiritual heights, but Mandan Movie is certainly an intense, cleansing and singularly anarchic listen.

It starts with juddering drum polyrhythms, churning web-web and light flickering keyboard clusters, placing us immediately in electric Miles Davis territory. Mandan Movie move even further out than the delirious nut of the Agharta and Pangaea sessions into the brutal Metal Industrial of God and the electronic freakout of Marcellus. Kenetics-style tone-clouds and decured guitar solos are giddy as the bottom of the bucket song leap into and pollute one another.

However, it's the smaller sound sketches that are the most successful – brass arrangements like wild extrapolations from Herbie Hancock's *The Prisoner*, as dense and bewildering as

driving through fog; a sad, restrained distorted guitar interface reminiscent of Fuskadelic's "Maggot Brain". The louder moments develop into violent oppositions, submerging lethrite jazziness in swampy rock noise.

MAREK IT'S THESE MAGIC MOMENTS THAT I'VE LIVING FOR

MEISON CD

BY NICK SOUTHPAGE

For Austrian singer, songwriter and multi-instrumentalist Christoph Marek, magic moments come from many places in many guises. This album contains straightforward sturm and shout protest folk in the form of "Call to Arms" or the ramshackle, bass buzz augmented "Do You Remember The Days?"; a kindergarten organ suicide note in "Love is a Wonderful Thing" (reminiscent of Pink Floyd's "Nobody Home"); echo-soaked four-track lo-fi fidelity in "I Regret"; the plain and simple longing of a plain and simple love song called "Still I Love You"; ribald confessions to a lover for a convenient if empty head one with "My Blow Up Doll"; poignant electronic-dappled slow marches scendening sunny moments on beaches where the singer once hoped he might "Get Me Some Loving"; and stark Ingriedrian Country folk yearning with "Come On Boy, Stop Your Crying".

There are forebears to this kind of approach. It would be miraculous if Marek was unaware of Lou Barlow's many *Sebastien* incarnations, or Beck's beatbox mutations. However, his sheer electroclash transmutes into become a modus operandi in its own right. Part of a rootless listening generation, picking styles hither and thither, Marek is the obvious outcome – a perfectly rootless performer. His appropriation of any form can never be authentic, but nor is it disingenuously inauthentic. Only his choice to operate alone and to author all the songs and sounds himself means there is any consistency on his output. The bending line is that he chooses to do it this way on this occasion.

LASSE MARHAUG SPAGHETTI WESTERN WINDOW: LIVE IN CHICAGO

UTECHE CD

RAS MOSHE MUSIC NOW

UNIT

LIVE SPIRITS NO 1

UTECHE CD

RAS MOSHE MUSIC NOW

UNIT

LIVE SPIRITS NO 2

UTECHE CD

FRODE GJERSTAD &

STEVE HUBBACK

ONE FOOT MOVING: LIVE IN

STAVANGER

UTECHE CD

BY BRIAN MORRISON

The ethnology is Medio Low German – "utdrøft" means outsider, bastard, rejected – the provenance is Keith Utøch's new grassroots band in Milwaukee, and the music's an unexpected blend of New York improv, Euro-free and Norwegian noise. Strong, quirky design on cardboard splices; minimal info, limited edition releases that probably shouldn't be.

Saxophonist Ras Moshe made an out-come with Schematic, an album of tough, centred free

blows that unlike most of the wannabe Free Music right now has somewhere to go back to at night, though essentially improvised, Moshe and his Music Now band begin with basic compositional ideas and work outwards from the centre. His players know how to work with him rather than simply plod independent paths, and the first disc, recorded at Syracuse Festival Film Festival and at an unspecified Beach forum, is a winner. Drummer Jason Karl and bassist Matt Hayner seem to be regular partners, but bassists Ken Filiano and François Grillet (who are on the latter date only) are making names for themselves in their own right, and Moshe obviously has no problem getting guys to work with him. I heard Chris Forbes's electric piano shimmer. The second disc is even more ambitious, but slightly attenuated in execution. The first piece features a peerless noise group, again two bassists but with a singer, but the bulk of the disc is by the core trio, who sound hot.

Frode Gjerstad's work is well known from Detal with John Stevens and Johnny Dyani, but Steve Hubbard's extraordinary percussion sculpture provides a fresh and unashamedly setting for Frode's lesser known clarinet and bass clarinet work. The six pieces are of widely differing durations and it's fair to say that the longer tracks suit Hubbard's absolute approach more. The clarinetist is more focused on the shorter cuts, tending to noodle when the duration exceeds over ten minutes. The live sound can't be faulted, very present and exact.

Norway's Lasse Marhaug is a quiet genius. His noise manipulators have often worked better in the context of film – Thomas Elvin's *Intermission*, Billy Child's video *Die to Bloody Fluids* – and in other collaborations, notably with Metzbow, than as free-standing solo entities. This live performance from WNRU puts most of the existing catalogue in the shade. The opening cartridge crackles might almost be a tribute to Cage, but the piece opens up into a wildly zoological soundscape that is as warmly funny as it is virtuosically realised.

CHIE MUKAI & GARY SMITH

EIGHT +
PARMAVICTORY CD

BY JULIAN COWLEY

At the end of the 1970s Chie Mukai became involved with Tokyo's improving scene under the aegis of Takehisa Kosugi. Fluous violinist and founder member of the legendary *By Mosh! Traders*, More recently she has received for PSF with her psychadelically inclined group Chie-Shu. She plays the erhu, a two-stringed Chinese violin, or *erku* in Japanese. She also plays percussion and sometimes sings in a wailing voice. On Eight +, recorded in London in 2001, she is embroiled in some improvised duets with highly distinctive electric guitarist Gary Smith.

Mukai's playing has an obsessive quality, absorbed and instant within its own chosen limits, whether plucked, bowed or beaten. She seems to be working her way into the materials, burrowing in or wrapping them steadily around herself. Smith, on the other hand, is extrovert and expressive. He quavers sounds from his instrument, gouges of edgy noise, swirls of electric dust, raw scrapes, bell-like throbbing and metallic sonics. It's a drama of contrasting temperaments: Mukai focused on some remote

The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

In deep: Art Ensemble Of Chicago

Subtitled "Deep Jazz From The USA 1970-85", **New Thing!** (Soul Jazz 3LP/2CD) features a host of artists whose work坐s in the immediate, so-called aftermath of the 60s Civil Rights movement. Although it contains pieces by the Art Ensemble Of Chicago, Sun Ra (in his case, "Angels And Demons At Play" which dates from 1955 but harks forward decades hence) and Archie Shepp, this is not quite a free jazz blowout in the *Sonatas As Life* mode as Val Wilmer (who contributes both sketches and photos to this collection) would have it. Art Ensemble Of Chicago's "Funny AACD" is, as groove-based as its title suggests, a real pugil of a riff, with the melancholy energy of Lester Bowie's trumpet weaving in and out of a cascade of Maxon and bicycle horns. Shepp's "Money Blues", meanwhile, instigates a brass street dance in hellionish postures at the cage-strapped privations of his people, while Rashied Ali and Frank Lowe venture furthest into New Weird Jazz terrain on "Our Exchange", with its rustling percussion and nervous wisps of Kasaah-dinged flute.

The opening "Street Rap" by Maslana is a lively snapshot of the everyday, funky cakewalk of streetlife, while even Alice Coltrane's stately rendition of husband John's "A Love Supreme" is unperformed by a James Brown-style "Funky Drummer" backbeat. Everyone, it seems, was at one time or another, infected by the boogie. But much of the colouring and mood of this collection is derived from African music, ballet, strings, Eastern philosophy, amounting to a frequent recourse to esoterica and utopianism, dreams of fertility, sunlit uplands to come, a sublime form of escape from the hurried political, racial and social realities of the day. It's aforementioned "Angels And Demons At Play" is a case in point, with its tropical intonations of imaginary places and times (any place or time but America in 1975) while Travis Biggs' "Tibetan Severity" takes cool noose in Eastern chimes. Stanley Cowlitz's "El Space '0", meanwhile, is urban and grim. Although music of this kind has been subsumed for Trip Hop sampling and replication over the years, it was bone of desperate times and present tension rather the bland imitations of a mere recent, cosier age. One of Soul Jazz's most essential collections. (DS)

To mark ten years of consistent marginal agitation, the Rochester, New York based Carbon Records released 10 specially commissioned CD-Rs every 3.5 days throughout 2004. **30 Yr. Series** (Carbon CD-R) gathers all of these releases plus a bonus DVD-R in a handsome wood and metal box that stands as one of the most defiantly beautiful manifestations of home-made, non-corporate packaging to come out of the CD-R revolution to date. In a way, what's happening with CD-Rs right now parallels much of what has been going on in the bootleg scene for the past few decades, where a potent

combination of subterfuge and love has birthed product of a quality that has far outstripped the vision and capabilities of the "official" record labels, while dispensing with their legitimising stamp altogether.

As well as setting an exemplary standard for would-be basement Infidels, 10 Yr Series provides a capsule overview of some of the most intriguing marriages of avant theory and punk-primitivism currently orbiting the mainstream. Besides masternoding the whole Carbon Record project, Joe Turtur is a formidable guitarist in his own right. Along with his activities as a member of the post-LAFMS aggro unit, Pingo, he moonlights under the solo guise of Joe+N. Joe+N's contribution to the box is *Live At Christchurch*, where he plays guitar, purrs like a cat and toots chimes of feedback from this ax. There's more than a hint of Luau Mazzacane in the subtle thrust of his playing, but there's a stubby majesty to the way that he weaves with fury single notes that is all his own. Blood Stereo, the UN duo of Dylan Ayreyas and Karen Constance, are represented by 30-plus minutes of *Hyena* For The Cynical Aviatrix, a phased fog of sick, toxic stabs that offer an intuitive structural logic that is supernaturally satisfying. Tari Carter of Chasmablembo hooks us with *As Castles On The Ghost Coast*, member Shawn McMullen for Colors, for a series of still, low-level improvisations that vibrate with a tensile, apocalyptic air. Carter's slide work is particularly hypnotic, the slightest flick of his wrist sending small bubbles of metal straight up your spine.

Eddie Flowers' legendary Crawlspace unit cross-lurching group sprawl with a wild fus of cut-up sound and comedy shorts on Melbournes Cabbage Hill Ho, while Dead Machine, the duo of Wolf Eyes' John Cipolla and Weeden Ward & The Vansheng Voss' Tom O'Rourke, navigate zero gravity with nothing but a pair of lead boots, some loose spools of tape and a huge grid of tactile electricity on *Mystery Of The Fall Of Islands* Part Two. These are also worthwhile contributions from Ming (aka Campbell Krasse of Birchville Cat Moto), Andy Gilmore, Howard Steler And The Cherry Pox, Cointe and Mike Shiflet. Fire this one alongside Reverent's Albert Ayler box for a lesson in the best way to prime a countercultural timebomb. (OK)

While Fat Cat's LP releases slowly notion a weighty roster of artists, their split 12" releases are unexpected, energetic bolts out of the blue. It doesn't get much more enigmatic than Kanono No 1 from the Democratic Republic Of Congo, constituting two tracks on *Split #18* (Fat Cat 12"), their music is like a classic high life record led into a ring modulator, the percussive electronic effect that lumps multiple harmonies together to create a jarringly dissonant mush. This is African pop music as flat and abrasive it simply sounds utterly alien on record, perhaps gaining a more utilitarian dimension through the massive stack of speakers used live. The other side features the

meditative guitar/drum improvisations of The Dead C, sounding groover yet somehow more sensuous than ever before. Like a battered old super 8 film, the marks and bruises of the recording process feed as rich in significance as the content therein. The hymns, solo project of Glenn Donaldson from the Jewelled Aster collective, contributes five intimate songs/iges to *Split #27* (Fat Cat 12") as warm and welcoming as autumnal autumn sunlight. Australian Chris Smith completes the release with blank, cleansing guitar noise which recalls Flying Saucer Attack at their most dense and opaque. (DM)

Self-styled "creative music quarterly" Unknown Public has made a selection from its first four issues, now out of print, and titled it, unambiguously, **Unknown Public 03-04 Volume One** (Unknown Public CD/book), comprising "music and more from the first four issues". This audio journal's mission has been to explore "non-instrumental" music – indicating that it has defined itself in relation to the academic establishment. As a result, and despite its adjectival, UP has often sounded a little too clean cut. Happily the journal has loosened its tie over the years and dropped the half-empty overseas box packaging in favour of more hardware and compact CD/book packages.

Among the quirky electroacoustics and elaborate aesthetic blunders, there are a few gems: a perfectly mercurial piano improvisation by Alex Maguire; a rag for multitracked trombones by Fayez Virji; Jan Steele's studiously effulgent translation of Indonesian pop music; and Nicolas Collins's elegiac "Still Lives" featuring a skipping CD of Italian Renaissance music. (PE)

Kitsune X (Kitsune CD) is about what you'd expect from a French art/fashion/design collective – utterly cool avant-electro-rock and party discs, featuring the likes of Joaquin, Volga Select and Captain Corvus, that would be as at home in the high street boutique Colette as in the basement. But trends become trends, in the best of times, because they're appetible and diverting. I won't begrudge LD0 Soundsystem's "Leaving My Edge" protagonism for introducing Daft Punk to the rock kids any more than I'll denounce the Pet Shop Boys' *Days*-influenced "Darling", by Popular Computer, as *GaragePunk's* Miami-bound electro throwback "You Gotta Know", complete with vocals so squeaky they'd send Kanye West reaching for the helium. Similar Mobile Discos turn in a surprisingly kinetic track of glitchy, jolting electro, and DJ Assault takes it back to New Jack Swing on a heartfelt ode to syncretism. What the rock kids seem to want out of dance music is personality and every song here is brimming with it, whether in the gruff growl of Post No Bills or the fey affect of Hot Chip. The best track, though, blending the acidic urges of Anath, Mathew Jonson and Black Strobe, is a hidden cut credited only to the pseudonym Oxter Schmidt: Long live faceless technobalcks! (PS)

Compiled by Arne Delgianakis for the Australian market from the catalogues of Belgian sister labels Sub Rosa and Qwestness, **positive platforms** (Sonic Arcana CD) consists of music that forces us "to stop [whatever else we're doing] and become mindful", that "will bring meaning to the quiet spaces". That's what it says in the sleeve notes. All the pieces were made between 1998 and 2003 with the exception of former Velvet Underground drummer Angus MacIe's drone-based "Inches #2", which was recorded in the mid-1960s. The dreamy, dub-influenced atmospheres and sleek pneumatic beats of the first track, *Pan American's* "The Passage", set the tone for what follows: two or three tracks sit stubbornly in the background, like aural wallpaper, and rather than capture the mind they allow it to drift away and latch on to other things. They are, in other words, a bit boring. But the best, such as Taylor Deupree and Kenneth Kiesler's glitch piano cut-in, "02 15.02", the strings-laden title track from David Toop's Black Chamber, Yoshimi Hanno's layered and slowly evolving "Platform Variation II", and i-sounds' edgy remix of Calab's "Sun Creeper", quietly hold the listener's attention and pay dividends. (BM)

This Place Is Dreaming (K-RAA-K CD) is subtitled "Reinventing Asia Through The States And Sounds Of Brussels". An accompanying note indicates that the city-wide project from which the CD arose, Brussels Sonic Matter, curated as part of the Argos festival 2004, was an attempt to "concentrate Brussels' sonic reality into music". Maybe that's true of the majority of the pieces. But Enrico Lopez-Menchies' "Swimming (Reverso)" is an unadulterated field recording (the challenge to the listener: find the music in the everyday?). And former *Stillepostyoga* member Hinner Bjørgulfsson cheats somewhat by merely grafting music – his electronics and the ringing chords of Conver's electric guitars – onto interview material called from the spoken word archives of Brussel's Belfort Ons Bro (Brussels Belongs To Us). These incongruities don't really matter. **This Place Is Dreaming** is a fascinating collection of sound collages and soundscapes, some of which, by Yannick Kynckens, Oliver Caparros, Justin Bennett and Mana Blondel, have been modified till the pig squeaks, the sum of the 10 contributors (Hildegard Westerkamp, Mark Bain, Ali Ondra and Vula Nedu) draw on material from India, Amsterdam, Paris and Japan/Italy is Brussels, a cosmopolitan city, dreaming of the distant origins of some of its residents, or are they aural holiday snapshots? The sleeve notes say that these samplings from elsewhere "create a bridge to other atmospheres and cultures". Musical or not, they're very effective. (BM) □ Reviewed by Phil England, David Keenan, Brian Moriarty, Philip Sheldrake, David Stubbs and Derek Wahlsley



point of convergence; Smith centrifugal in its tendencies, eruptive and ferocious. Remarkably the pair occupy common ground to operate within a shared frame of reference, bound together by dynamic tensions generated from their difference and from their mutual attentiveness.

**MY CAT IS AN ALIEN/
JIM O'ROURKE**
FROM THE EARTH TO THE
SPHERES VOLUME 4
OPRAK LP

**MY CAT IS AN ALIEN
THROUGH THE REFLEX OF THE
RAIN**
FREE PORCUPINE SOCIETY CD

**ROBERTO OPALIO
CHANTS FROM ISOLATED
GHOSTS**
OPRAK CD-R

BY DAVID KISENBERG

The Italian Opalio brothers' ongoing series of limited edition LPs pairing side-long works from the likes of Jackie-O Muthera and Thurston Moore with all-new broadcasts from their own particular zone, just keeps getting better. Much more than simply a plug-back to the stars, these high-pitched face-offs have forced the brothers to raise their game, with the result that the series stands as an archive of some of their boldest moves yet committed to wax.

The latest volume might be the best yet. O'Rourke's side readily ups the ante with a newly enhanced recording drawn from his early work with tabletop guitar. The recording affords a very low pass through the mechanics of the instrument itself, with a set-up that foregoes the unamplified snap of the vicious strategies that he applies to excite the strings, setting the sound as transcribed by the speakers a little further off. It feels like having your ear wedged between the pickup and strings. O'Rourke starts out with a dense, milking drone that's as alive with microtonal activity as the hurdy-gurdy conceptions of Keiji Haino — from here he moves to a dance of fast single notes that almost sound like a spontaneous, post-industrial rethinks of traditional gamelan. Despite all this un-arranged genesis, the whole piece feels solidly plotted.

My Cat Is An Alien's side starts off with a fucking loop of pure vocal muck from Roberto Opalio. His new vocal form is one of the central highlights of this latest batch, a wordless style that has a startling, pre-attack-ready quality to it. At points it sounds like Basie's Kansas City work with autistic children. From the funny side of vocal dementia that opens the side, the group move into more guitar-based territories, with a single, pulsing baseline illuminated by strands of lonesome notes in a way that mimics Crimson and Tenor Carter's work with Charlemagne. But the Opalio brothers push it all the way to catharsis, with electric strings slowly dissolving into a shell-bombast of cymbals in a way. Through The Reflex of The Rain feels like a continuation of the strategies initiated on the split LP moving from a rainforest of electrically worthy of David Taylor to these more celebratory cymbal works. Chants From Isolated Ghosts is the real wildcard here, and one of the best releases from the Opalio stable to date, with Roberto clearing enough space to really explore his new vocal approach. The results are extraordinary, with searing alarm tones and deep fields of hulacnegrific environmental sound

softly illuminated by the unearthly light bearing from his lungs.

**NURSE WITH WOUND/
JIM O'ROURKE**
ANGRY ELECTRIC FINGER 1:
TAPE MONKEY MOOCH
BETA-LACTAM RING CD

**NURSE WITH WOUND/
CYCLOBE**
ANGRY ELECTRIC FINGER 2:
PARAPARAPARALLELO-
GRAMMATICA
BETA-LACTAM RING CD

**NURSE WITH WOUND/
IRR.APP.(EXT.)**
MUTE BELL EXTINCTION
PROCESS
BETA-LACTAM RING CD
BY KEITH MOLINE

I once got into hot water with Nurse With Wound's Steven Stapleton by suggesting that previous remixes of his material had been disappointing, produced by collaborators unworthy of the genius (Stapleton took issue with the term 'remixed' rather than the basic thrust of the argument). Luckily this sleepwalks to these three superb new albums offer some truly sensible alternatives — disc one was 'desected, ferkled and groovn by Jim O'Rourke', Cyclobe's Usana Brown and Stephen Thrower 'dismantled, raped and set fire to' the material for the second instalment, while for the third record, long-time Nurse ally Matt Waldron 'dissected, defanged, abused and beautified' Stapleton's and Cole Petree's original work. It's the Nurse aesthetic that shines through this trilogy most strongly, with each of the remixers — some, the distortion/translators/beautifiers (one hesitates to use 'sabots') — showing due deference to the masters by allowing the original material to pass through their own aesthetic filters essentially intact.

NWW's music is truly surreal, yet rooted in some kind of universal dream logic that is utterly familiar despite its incongruity. Two aspects of their art might explain the confidence and restraint of their collaborators. The first is the way the duo manage to imbue familiar sounds (voices, metallic objects, the farts and sex of Hans Fischer and the late Tim Bebe from Kneatock legends Xhol Carazon) with a hyper-real radiance and sharpness of focus, making further processing of the sound circuit without destroying its essential characteristics. More important still is the placement of these sounds in the context of the piece, the exquisite balance of repetition and surprise.

The is not music as a procession of moments, sensations and effects, a music whose meaning can survive any listening with its linear chronology. For all its apparent nebulosities, its architectural mechanisms are complex, precise and difficult to take apart. The result is three records that all sound like Nurse With Wound, with key passages appearing across the collection. The leitmotif of what might be opening fishing net filtered and panned across the stereo spectrum shows how completely musical their use of simple sounds can be. It's a ravishing melody which results at various points the slowly billowing atmospheres of Soliloquy For Lulu, the metallic vortices of Spiral Isaura and the deployment of relatively conventional instrumental music evident on recent

albums like An Awkward Pose. Though each album is highly recommended, the Jim O'Rourke disc is particularly good. The two 20-minute pieces ebb and flow, build and recede effortlessly, with guest David Tibet's distant guitar squall underscoring a darkly gauzy string passage that suggests the golden age of Nurse's Rock In Opposition heroes Unvers Zero. This is work of exceptional quality and power.

RAVING SONG SYSTEM
VOLUME ONE
NOOK CD
BY JEFF HOLLINGS

A moody Swiss power trio made up of Simone Vollmer on vocals, Dominik Blum on piano and Remo Signer on drums, with all three pitching in and shaking electric sound chores, Raving Song System display all the neat and burnished qualities normally associated with a bunch of music students out on a spree. The staff's all there and its kept beautifully in check, though just slightly out of whack at the same time. Electroacoustic textures shimmer and ripple together, Vollmer shows sensitivity and control in her delivery and Signer combines lightness of touch with sharpness of attack in his percussion work.

Then, dear God, you realise that each of the seven songs that make up this freely flowing cycle of compositions is actually a setting of a poem by em cummings. What were these guys thinking? Set against the delicate nuances and playful tumbling rhythms of his verse, Raving Song System's vast, collectively determined arcs, together with the heavily underscored ebb and flow of their playing, suddenly appear dumpy and inappropriate. Form and function have somehow lost touch with each other; which is a shame, as they really play well together. They evidently know how to listen to each other; it's just a shame they didn't try listening a little more closely to their source material.

THE RESIDENTS
ANIMAL LOVERS
MUTE CD
BY SAM DRAVES

If Edward Albee can stage a West End play about a man in love with a goat, perhaps this latest album by veteran outsiders The Residents is tapping a more mainstream vein than first appears. Animal Lovers is a concept album that tries to embrace the animal inside us all — the animal identified by Freud in the form of those disruptive and anarchic desires which civilisation and its toolkit of ideologies seeks to repress.

As you'd expect from a group whose members have spent 30 years wasting eyeball mucks and top hats, playful stabs of voice and persona mark each track. This is music as a series of adopted disguises that constantly defer attention from any notional authorial presence. The heavily filtered vocal to 'On The Way To Oklahoma' bubbles and gurgles through a single, barely-lit balcony that takes a nasty twist as the falsetto narrator eats a sunbathing dog. 'What Have My Chokins Done?' is a strongly affecting lament, and one of several tracks with eldritch, jazz-infected vocal arrangements, calling to mind the angularities of Carla Bley or even Grace Slick. Keyboards, understated rhythms and disjointed melodies are all heavily processed and occasionally faced with

a like kit or submerged fuzz guitar.

An excess of overly obvious performative stages of animal imitation is thankfully avoided, although all of the basic rhythm tracks are down from matting rhythms sampled from cicadas and frogs. The Residents walk a precarious line between American unfeely creepiness and a more mannered absurdism. But when it works the feeling is of a strange empathy of a group saying to its listeners: "We are all as mediated as each other."

BRANDON ROSS
COSTUME
INTOXICARE CD
BY JULIAN COLEWAY

As a vital longterm participant in Henry Threadgill's music making, and as a member of the impressive, contained power trio the Hamlet Tuomas with bassist Melvin Gibbs and drummer JT Lewis, Brandon Ross has shown himself to be a dynamic electric guitarist with a healthy aversion to cliché and superficial effects. Costume is an elegant, often beautiful acoustic set, recorded with appropriate fidelity in New York in February 2004. It displays Ross's virtue with crystalline clarity. Arrangements are constructively sparse, allowing silence and space to avert his meticulous patterning of melodic shapes. He's helped out by Lewis's subtle, restrained drumming and by the warm, resonant acoustic and electric bass playing of Stuus Tsoonev, both formerly fellow members of the Threadgill embourge.

The strength of Costume lies partly in its thoughtful programming: a mix of originals, Ornette Coleman's 'Race Face', an inventive setting of poetry written and incited by Sadie Bees, and haunting adaptations of the Reverend Gary Davis's 'I Am The Light' and the gospel standard 'Twelve Gates To The City'. The instrumentation has been carefully tailored to the needs of each track and to the CD's overall feel. Ross sounds wonderfully spiky on soprano guitar interpreting the Coleman piece. He plays barbs in a quartet that features Shuri Tsu's Chinese flute. He sings with soulful tenderness, an affecting combination of resilience and vulnerability. There are tasteful contributions from Gregoire Maret on harmonica and Graham Hayes on comet. Technically, Ross is very fine throughout. But it's his acute proportioning of specific details and composition of the whole that makes Costume such an exceptional release and one that grows in stature with each listen.

SCANNER
THE RADIANCE OF A
THOUSAND SUNS BURST
FORTH AT ONCE
STEAMY SOUNDWORKS CD
BY CHRIS SHARP

So much electronic music is composed in a vacuum; the steely product of hours of silent communion with arcane software and sumptuously modified equipment. While there's something addictive about that quest for a pure sonic experience, uncontaminated by any link to the grubby world of everyday life, the results are often too solipsistic to make any emotional impact on the listener. This is one mistake that Robin Rimboud aka Scanner has never made. His work has always been a

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

Toshi Ichiyama plays peekaboo with the works of Tadanori Yokoo

Born in 1936, Tadanori Yokoo was Japan's leading print and poster designer during the 1960s and 1970s. In 1967 he co-founded theatre visionary Shuji Terayama's Tenjōsajiki company, and his posters for them, not to mention his graphics for novelist Yukio Mishima, among other radical figures, stand as remarkable evocations of an astonishingly productive, if short-lived period when the Japanese avant-garde and popular culture collided to produce great, hybrid works like *Opera* from the Works of Iwao Matsui (Bridge CD2) by composer Toshi Ichiyama.

Pretty much impossible to find since its 1969 release as a double LP, it is now reissued in a gloriously ornate album size box, with each of the set's CDs reproducing a slice apiece of the original vinyl picture discs. The box also contains prints of Ichiyama and Yokoo, plus a stack of beautifully reproduced Yokoo postcards and a Japanese-only hardback booklet. Yokoo's poster work leans towards collage that telescope the Japanese 1960s through the war years back to the fashions of the 1920s. As the title indicates, Ichiyama's opera takes its cues from Yokoo's works rather than his life, correspondingly, it juxtaposes bright, loud, clashing elements, thankfully without making any effort to harmonise them with the electronic passages that tind the whole together. An evocative folk fragment gives way to some chilling electronics incorporating a military march, which is followed by some sentimental gush called "Mavis' Heart", and so on, to the opera's closing side of era and apple songs, capped with a balled up Yokoo being by actor Ken Takakura. At the album's centre is a tremendous if disproportionately long 26-minute freakout by early Japanese psyche group The Flowers, pushing themselves beyond their limits. Clocking in at under 80 minutes, *Opera* is undoubtedly phony but its darkly voluptuous contents justify the expense. (BK)

Incidental Music is usually conceived to occur at the periphery, but that doesn't mean it must be without incident. The music of *Gast Del Sol* could be considered incidental, in the latter sense, in that this Chicago project was formed from the desire to operate on rock to remove its verbiage, permitting it to make sly and cutting comments from its chair in the corner. *Gast Del Sol* (named after a growlingine noisemaker) emerged as a "providential" unit out of *Bastre*, the group formed in the late 80s in Chicago by

John McEntee and Bundy K Brown, and joined around 1991 by David Grubbs, who was taking a degree in English at the University of Chicago, having moved up from Louisville where he had been in Spinal Tap. Regarding what Grubbs later called "a scaling-back, a unknown disarmament" from Bastre's scratchy post-punk attack, McEntee trundled off to form *Tantrise* while Gastr turned tame. The first of four releases, 1993's *The Suspense Seminar* (Dexter's Cigar/Drug City CD) is an airy, unpredictable affair, after a couple of tracks purchased by McEntee, its set pieces are directly plucked out on acoustic guitars, thorny electric bass and piano, suggesting long, cloudy afternoons trying to net ideas that must have been flying around like butterflies.

During that year Jim O'Rourke returned to Chicago following an extended stay in Europe that included work with the cream of Cologne's experimental scene. With Brown crowding towards the tertium camp, Grubbs and O'Rourke – both part-time members of Red Krayola – became Gastr's core, and their first recordings appeared in early 1994 as *Croak! Croak! Dr Ry* (Drug City CD). Songs such as "Work From Smiles" are hardly songs at all, more atom bomb guitar ductily sagging around Grubbs's aleatory formal-exercise poetry ("Smoky Jones jumps canines before/Cansse belows bawls the pup"). It was presumably O'Rourke, under the influence of European Improv, who invited bass clarinetist Gea Colensen and vibraphonist Steve Butters in for "Smoke" – their six-minute Ambient cod is shimmeringly gorgeous. On "Every Five Miles" and "The C In Case", the duo encourage the music to take long, slow breaths, while the 15 minute "The Wrong Soundings" places it on a treadmill. Incredibly sounds and stories alter into view but everything is achieved without selfconscious "studio trickery", and there's a physicality to the sound that conjures sensations of wet sand, freshly soiled legs, dozing gazing in the early morning sun. 1995's *Mirror Repair* (Drug City CD) is a slim, five-song pamphlet of 21 minutes. O'Rourke drowns prickly digital sleet over Sufi-esque piano on "Eight Comers" and adds a brief middle eight on a fairly old psychey synth; on "Mirror Repairs", Grubbs finds madcap inspiration in a restaurant bill, singing over a dusty recording of a twangy piano. Grubbs weighs every word caustically; haiku-like stanzas are unrefined, meanings are left flapping, open

like a barn door. *Upgrade And Alterlife* (Drug City CD) marked the transition to their confident final phase. Released in 1996, it's a huge, sprawling suite of cerebral, abstract rock, its disparate elements held together with a surface tension that makes the whole seem about to spring apart. Correcting the dots between *Faust* and post-punk experimentalism, it employs an expanded colour wheel that ranges from Mats Gustafsson's whirling kettle flogon to "The Sea Incarnate", to Kevin Drumm's guitar bars on the opening "Our Expansive Replica Of Eternity". Other guests include improvisers Günter Müller, Turi Karpolis and Ralf Illewiwz (contributing tape on "Helle Spritz"), Tony Connell's voice sprinkles extra lemon juice over a final, 12 minute take on John Fahey's "Dry Bones In The Valley".

It wasn't long before the tension snapped. One more album, *Corrofleur*, was to follow before a split whose details never fully came out. Grubbs subsequently cited "personal stuff", while O'Rourke is on record thus: "The other guy in the band decided that nobody else who was on the record could really have anything to do with any decision." All of Gastr's music sounds conflicted, oddly out of sync; not a diatonic in harness but a civil war of unresolved chords and grinding sonorities. Nearly a decade on, this inspiring body of work stays slippery enough to defy descriptive traction. (RT)

Originally released last year and produced by Jim O'Rourke, *A Ghost Is Born* (Nonesuch CD) follows this Howe seamstress through her Country and rock 'n' roll roots with exploratory arrangements, and more extreme tendencies. It now comes reissued with an extra disc containing 20+ odd minutes of new and live material. The owners of the original album can download these extra tracks for free, and as it stands it's more of a good reason to check out what the former Nine cover stars are up to.

"Experimental" would be the wrong way to label Wilco; it's more that their vocabulary is wider and used to more telling effect than most groups who skirt the rock mainstream. This is exemplified by the piano staccato piano, wovo with sponges, on "Hummingbird", while the motorik pulses of "Spiders (Kolossal)", with Jeff Tweedy's wiggled-out, no-nigga guitar yield the album's standout track. Then there's the lengthy laptop abstraction, "Less Than You Think", which is surely destined to be the group's own

"Revolution No 9", in its potential to be skipped by listeners. The bonus disc contains a live version of "Handshake Drugs" that trades in the caustic rasping of Jeff Tweedy's guitar for something altogether looser, a couple of cuts from the album remastered in a similar manner, and two new tracks – the finely wrought "Panthers" and the taut, gloves-off rock of "Kicking Television". (MB)

This release of *Accumulator 1/2* (BNA/est 2002) by Gottfried Michael Koenig is as essential and inspiring as its cover is dull and grisly but it's not easy listening. These ten works testify to the uncompromising modernity of Koenig's vision of a music whose moment-to-moment detail and large scale are aspects of the same continuum. Duly "Output", written in 1979 as an exploration of the possibilities of the PRISM/VDSM computer music program, comes across as odd and dreary, sounding curiously more dated than the other earlier works. In addition to composition, Koenig (born in 1926), one of the prime movers of a group who convened at the Darmstadt Summer School in the years following the Second World War to build the new world of European avant-garde music, has always been an eloquent theorist, a pioneer in programming (Project 1, Project 2 and SSP) and a respected and influential teacher at the Institute of Sonology in Utrecht, Holland, where he has been based since 1964. *Klangfiguren I* and *Essay*, both completed in 1956, are key works, both in terms of the rigour of their construction and the groundbreaking soundworlds Koenig created together in the studios of West German Radio in Cologne, where he also assisted Stockhausen, Kappel and Ligeti. *Terminus I* (1962) and *Terminus II* (1967) show how Koenig's compositional thought evolved to match the technical facilities available to him, culminating in the series of eight works entitled *Funabara* (1968-69), of which five are included here.

Using a specially designed sequencer to set and change voltage levels at different speeds, or even randomly, Koenig approached his goal of restricting tape manipulation to a minimum, generating much of the sound material automatically by a preset curve on his function generator; the result is music whose ferocious modernism remains unparalleled. (DM) □

Reviewed by Mike Barnes, Boba Kopf, Dan Warburton and Rob Young



response to exterior influence, a fractured dialogue with whatever drifts into its path – from his early recordings of interrupted mobile telephone calls to more recent projects involving collaborations with august institutions and unheralded artists around the world. It's not surprising, then, that a random and unlikely suggestion should have produced this, one of his most accessible and touching releases.

At the midpoint of the bridle and groan, *The Radiance Of A Thousand Suns...*, was improvised and recorded in a rural Dutch church last summer as part of their wedding ceremony. Not surprisingly, the music is tender and optimistic in tone, the sonic equivalent of a wistful tear welling in the corner of the eye. "Silent, Unspoken Memories" draws on the sonorous cadences of the Baroque devotional tradition, all stately circular motion and warm bass drones, while "Walk Gently Through The World" builds gradually on the kind of languid, twinkling guitars that illuminate Eric's *Apoxie*. The title track revolves around a simple, openended string quartet loop that is somewhat unexpectedly augmented by a dreamy helium vocal sample, punctuated in the form of the pell-mell, MDMA-drenched down of now. And the lengths, concluding "And I Shall Love Because Of You" is a warm-blooded, meditative drift which blendsbirdsong and church bells with soft organ chords and swelling digital evolutions. On paper it sounds sentimental, but it's delivered with poise and restraint, and so succeeds entirely.

SHINING IN THE KINGDOM OF KITSCH YOU WILL BE A MONSTER

RUNE GRAMMOON CD

BY JOHN GRILL

The title to this CD by Norwegian Shining almost outdoes my all-time favorite, Australia's *Slab* and their album, *Clifford, Draining, Please Don't Live In The Past*. Its pre-publicity rather unkindly compares it to early King Crimson, when in fact it's more like Charlatans live loose with a sampling synthesizer and the amp turned up to 11. The levels of complexity on this recording could be described as a post-punk "Unwarmed Question", but expect ear damage.

Opener "Giant Weather Report" had me crying with laughter at its Death Metal riffing, although this is Death Metal with the technique of classic Mahavishnu Orchestra. (There's also a fairly elegant allusion to Led Zeppelin's "White Lotta Love" as well.) Dimey timed signature jazz rock of the Heavy Cow school mixes with electronics, neoclassicism and free jazz in one unihylo blitz of noise. There's also some harpsichord. Dmetri Coleman in here too. As well as this, it also compare them to Paul Gobinov's admirable Australian Art Ensemble, pursuing similar postmodern intentions, multi-layered and multi-referenced, and whose version of "We'll Meet Again" (check their *Drinking The Bell Backwards*) is a masterpiece. As well as their sonic assaults, Murkney and his accomplices also create beautiful, almost lightlike soundscapes.

The CD closes with a lovely, almost Well-like acoustic sacerdotal melody, respite after all those roaring electronics. If you ever see them do this live, hold on to your seat. When *Shining* kick off, you hear about it.

DAVID SIMONS PRISMATIC HEARING

TAZIK CD

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Of the ten diverse pieces on *Prismatic Hearing*, that the CD is nonetheless cohesive is due to the characterful nature of David Simons' compositions. He's a longstanding member of two very different ensembles, *Music For Homemade Instruments* and *Golemion Son Of List*, both of which play on *Prismatic Hearing*. He's also worked extensively in film, theater and dance, and the longest piece here, "Picasso/Roskvisnje", composed in 2003 for *BRD* Co in Zagreb, Croatia, was written to accompany a dance in which a woman relives her rope in extricating detail while costuming herself in the manner of a Picasso portrait. The source material is, as the title suggests, sampled from Picasso, his *Messe Soleil*, but the music is fractured into new rhythmic and melodic shapes and rendered distinctly ominous, benefiting from Simons' virtuosic use of sampling technology.

The earliest of the compositions, written in 1974 while Simons was a student at the California Institute of the Arts, is "Crown Of Thorns", for harpsichord, guitar, harp, cello, vibraphone, marimba and gong. It plays for a mere 36 seconds. This is the only piece on the CD that's strongly reminiscent of another composer: the Frank Zappa of his most accomplished album, *Uncle Meat*. Most of the other pieces on *Prismatic Hearing* were composed during the 1990s and the current decade, and by then Simons had a sure grasp of his materials and the ends to which they could be put. One of his innovations is to use a theremin both as itself and as a MIDI controller of sampled sounds. Theremin-ingrained samples feature on "Information" and "Dematerialized". The latter very effectively illustrates how ostensible sounds and voices, modulated electronically, can be shaped into a composition that transcends its source materials. During the final couple of minutes, the intense drama of the piece is undercut by humour, as interlaced and juxtaposed voices recite phrases such as "A burgundy suede spider is jumping an oil slick".

According to Simons, prismatic hearing is the process by which we hear: reconstructive sounds while we're actively hearing them, filtering them according to our tastes and prejudices, etc. He points out that, in many cases, "results" is a more interesting phrase than the "original". Something similar could be argued about his use of sampled material on *Prismatic Hearing*.

OVER & NIKO SKORPIO LINE IN PLACARD #7

SOME PLACE ELSE CD

BY NICK SOUTHWAKE

This album contains the solo and combined contributions of Ovvo & Niko Skorpio to the Placard Festival. These festivals are only made available on headphones, either by MP3 or via streams over the Internet, to locations either nearby or remote. On this occasion the performance took place in a Helsinki apartment, convenient for the Finnish artists, with listening sites ("the Placards") set up in France, Belgium and Italy. Theremin the conditions of its original performance are entirely replicable at home.

Headphone listening greatly heightens awareness of stereo. This is exploited throughout, pre-eminently by stereo panning with a vigor and abandon rarely heard since the technique's adoption by the mass market. Likewise, radical separation in each channel is often made apparent with rapid on-off sequences.

Ovvo's *h* develops a more converging aesthetic with these tools. "Pie-Concrete Echoes", for example, mixes muted thumps and echoes together with heter-sketches of purly electronic and partly synthetic sound. It is like listening to the infrastructure of a building, with wires, pipes, walls and posts conspiratorially cripplating to each other. Over this, Ovvo whispers barked threats in a little girl's voice. It is a piece born to live in the intimacy of the headphones, never taking the listener beyond the space between their ears.

Niko Skorpio's pieces are both more musical and more robust. The collapsing building sounds on "Okolice", or the Eastern wind riff of "Umlaut Cows" – or the recognisable guitar and percussive sounds throughout, take our minds to the source of their creation. The standout track, however, brings both artists together on "Dreams Which Burn", a teeing title for a piece where Ovvo's paranoid and unresolved soundscapes are buffeted by Niko's sonically seaper learnings to produce a disturbingly somber nightmare.

SOUND OF MUCUS

FILTH PHARMACY

NINTH WORLD MUSIC CD

BY ANDY HAMMOND

Pauline Kael once blasted *The Sound Of Music*, calling it *The Sound Of Mucus*. Perhaps taking its cue from the eminent film critic, this Swedish trio was formed six years ago, with Martin Küchen on reeds and found objects, Hennan Münzing on flanchet and sampler, and Andreas Åbergsson on percussion and drum machines.

This is their *first* CD, and a very dirty one it is too. Even familiar instruments are unrecognizable. Küchen's soprano and baritone saxes doesn't play a pure tone on the whole disc; instead he mostly prefers toneless breathing and vocalising. The flanchet is a frenetic stringed instrument of Hermes Münzing's own invention, made from two electric guitars. Stringing and tuning constantly change, and the resulting uncertainty is an inspiration. "Sometimes" he says, "I tune it nice and tempered, but mostly I play at least some of the strings to be a bit out of tune. I use lots of kinds of preparations; we have blades, rubber, metal, drumsticks, wood, plastic, brushes, stones."

The disc consists of eight "Lessons" followed by a "MusicFest Lecture". On "Lesson 1" the percussive sounds like someone shoveling coal in the back yard or rummaging in the garden shed, intercut to hilarious effect with fragments of Beethoven and Bach from the CD player. "Lesson 11" is a ferociously by solo saxes, while "Lesson 11" picks into three more intense like annoyances, more coal-scouring, hints of the funfair, and sounds as sterile as anything produced by Joe Meek. *Sound Of Mucus* are trying to liberate these sounds, so this homemade comic improv has a serious purpose – their genius is that these "wacky" effects don't come across as documentary. A zany disc, with some great sounds to pick your nose by.

TAURPIS TULA SPARROWS

ECLIPSE LP

BY MIKE BARNES

Sparrows was produced using guitars, stringed instruments and voices, and in fact the side-long "November 9" actually sounds like a giant string – or at least a number of shimmering sonic strands – slowly stretched to the axial horizon.

Practically speaking, this is the sound of Heather Leigh X on voice, pedal steel, psaltery (a rather like instrument whose origin goes back to ancient times) and coda (a small Latin American guitar-like instrument), and David Leigh X on guitars and loops. They're better known as Heather Leigh Murray, of *Charlamades*, *Scorcese* and *Babes On The Loose*, and guitarist David Keenan, known to these pages both as writer and musician.

At three pieces were improvised in a single night in 2004 – despite the use of dates in the titles – and convey the vague, mercurial moods and peculiar thoughtforms that characterize the mind's activities in the early hours. "June 6" has loops hanging in the air like rnung bells from some far off down temple ceremony, disrupted by background clangs and sonorings. Throughout this track, Heather Leigh's voice is a constant presence, leaping through the soundfield on a few endlessly heady wordless notes. Not only technically impressive, her singing is haunting and strangely moving. "August 27" is similar but slightly more animated, with glistening pedal steel and echoed voices circling Keenan's loops. The track exemplifies what makes *Sparrows* so compulsive – everything sounds like it's coming from a distance, creating a space into which the listener can't help but be drawn.

HÅKON THELIN A PREFERENCE TO OTHER THINGS

ALSOED CO

BY BRIAN MARLEY

Håkon Thelin signals his intentions from the outset, the opening track on the first CD to be released under his own name, is a self-composed pastiche of a late 18th century minuet scored for double bass (*Håkon himself*), cello, violin and viola, and underscored by clattering, freely improvised percussive courtesy of Iegar Zach. This mixture of the old and the new, of elements both composed and improvised, leavened with humor, is characteristic of what follows. There's even a weird little song situated unannounced at the end of the track, containing Ienens Xanakis' slyther Threny.

Xanakis' deliciously abrasive *Chora*, for double bass and saophone, is, with *Threny*, one of the heavyweight items here, alongside Bent Sverrein's quietly lacerating *The Hell Of The Heavens* and Jacob Druckman's *Valentines*, For Solo Double Bass. If that were the programme in its entirety, it would be well. But the lengthy *Heorot Metal*, composed and played by Thelin and Zach – which contains within it an except from Byrd's *Homeward*'s a dog named gange – shuffles a small handful of ideas ad nauseam and eventually outlays its welcome. The hidden song which ends the album, about a certain Mr Castle, is a delightful throwaway, but it's not in keeping with what has gone before. Thelin is a splendid musician, but *A Preference To Other Things* sells him a bit short. □

Avant Rock

Reviewed by Nick Southgate

AARKTICA

BLEEDING LIGHT

DARILA CD

"I have seen this night before", sings Jon DeFaro at the beginning of the ominously titled opening track "Depression Modern". The fourth Aarktika album deals in a minimalist shorn of the momentum of invention and change that might spark hope. There are soundtracks to the circular moods of depression, a reflection on the personal weight of a New Yorker's life, songs for those who would prefer to go to sleep in a town that never wakes. It is DeFaro's reverbed guitar lines that dominate, hinging diaphanous and skeletal throughout each piece. He is accompanied by ex-Anthony Braxton Ensemble members Seth Muteika, Nate Wooley, and Mike Pisch. Their standard contribution is on the concessioned styling of "A Shadow Knife (Drew The Bleeding Night)". DeFaro's interest in Indian music is most evident on the closing "Bleeding Light" where he intones "Come on baby, gonna make it through the night" over a sitar drone — a desolate hookend to where he came in.

AMP

US

VERY FRIENDLY CD

Ten years on from their formal debut, Amp have settled around duo Richard Walker and Kristie Charlif, although throughout this album various previous collaborations and a few new ones join them. US is a largely song based collection, its subject the veiled and veiling "special" relationship as Redhots enjoy with the former colonies and something explored both literally and as a metaphor for personal relationships. The soundscapes have adapted to the poetic of pointed expression and not merelylessly and thunderously behind Charlif's dark questions about a land of the free soaked in whisky and rye. "Opening" proceeds at a breakneck before giving way to the motek "Get Here". The stand-out track is the lyriplod imploding design of "Endgame", one of two tracks co-composed with Donald Ross-Shinner, best known for his guitar playing with Julian Cope. Expressive in its despondency, projected by its own density and darkness, it is a panegyric to a transatlantic apocalypse.

CRAIN

SPEED

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

Below Grunge ate the world and exploded, hideous and glutinous. Its bloated corpse feeding an army of corporate maggots, the post-holocaust scene was a thriving leek of ideas, energy and possibility. Were readers will be familiar with Louisville, Kentucky's canonical contribution to this, in the form of their foremost sons, Skint. However, like every scene, lost, obscurely in the shadows of the shadows of other fellow travellers are heroes unique but somehow greater. This has been the fate of Crain, whose debut album Speed, first issued in 1992 on the Autonomic Wrecks label, was never made available beyond its first pressing of

1000 copies.

This CD release adds four tracks to the eight-track basement sessions produced by Steve Allen. The dynamics required to deliver the post-hardcore riffs are all present and gloriously correct. "Car Crash Dementia" demonstrates the eternal appeal of the bass, then drums, then guitar stop/start rebuild. "Kneel" adopts the half-beat, half-a-song lyric over wire-taut scowling rhythms, as does the faster-paced "Fukerman". "Ten Miles Of Fiction" sits somewhere between the melodic leanings of Hissler DJ, and the straight-edge path of early Fugazi. Compared to many scannered extractions this one is self-evidently worthwhile rather than self-indulgently worthless.

THE CURTAINS

VEHICLES OF TRAVEL

PRENETIC CD

None of this album's 23 tracks last more than a poppy pent 140 seconds, each one a bright gem of gleaming inventiveness. Part of an overlapping consciousness of San Francisco musicians who also staff Deerhoof and The Natural Disasters, The Curtains see scene steward Greg Saufley joined by Chris Cohen and Andrew Maxwell. Previous outings have been entirely instrumental, and tracks like the prettily wheezing "A Sunken Surprise", the stumbling sun-dappled processionals "Won't Make It" or the heller sister Noah's Ark explosion of "The Bronx Zooattack" confirm this tradition. However, this third collection also contains various vocal delights including the charmingly sourulent "Fletcher's Favourite" and the sweet playground valentine of "The Chestnut Kid Returns". The brief, playful, quirky charm of the songs creates a bite-sized version of the Canterbury scene, the medieval feast reenvisioned as a postmodern finger buffet.

DET GAMLA LANDET

DET GAMLA LANDET

AA CD

Nations and peoples wax and wane with the fortunes of pestilence, war and famine. Families are broken and embittered by history's manifold sights and blessings. From these the fragments of memory and nostalgia emerge and are patterned into stones and song. Sweden's Det Gamla Landet are master storytellers in this tradition. The name means 'The Old Country' and these 14 instrumentals crafted only from banjo, melodeon, guitar and occasional snare drum, evoke the language of separation, of journeys taken, of returns welcomed, and unmeasured absences. "Det Heliga Landet" ('The Holy Land') sights out the promise of final settlement and long rest. All are odes to those who carry their homes in their hearts, or, in the case of "Sakta Dagen Från Snigen" (loosely, "Dew Licked From A Snail") on their backs.

THE ELECTRIC BUTTERFLIES

COLOURFUL WAVES

SUPERSPACE CD

When Peter Kimber reinvented himself as Sonic Boom he may have didn't anticipate the echoes

and reverberations reaching as far as Lima in Peru. Wilmer Gonzales is here as The Electric Butterflies, a one man outpost of done-rock excursions through sunbeams and rainbows. Meteorological peculiarities mean Lima spends half the year under the gurum, a mist that rests its soft underbelly upon the city from May onwards. Beneath this cloud holds the swelling blood-temperature synth drift of "Rodeado Por El Mar" ("Surrounded By The Sea") makes perfect sense, the vocals whispers of aged content. Equally mesmerising and amniotic are the seism pulses of "Canción De Cuna Extremista" ('Song Of The Extraterrestrial Cradle'), a lullaby of suspended animation for those carried by the chores of the gods from the earthbound mundane to the galactic miascence.

GREY DATURAS

DEAD IN THE WOODS

CRASHING JETS CD

If the Melbourne's sunshine puts a smile on most of us 'natives' faces, this must be compensated for by the scowls of the Grey Daturas, an improvisational instrumental three-piece intent on wiping all that is bright, clean and decent from the sunbaked land and crowding it in a mucky grot in the gape of the Pacific. "Repetit Until Failure" riles leaders and brutal, snarling and imroaking all in its path. "The Hanging Man Is No Peacock" twists in the wind. Bonnie 'Meron' G's guitar harmonics like crows pecking the corpse's eye while the sullen and cruel drums and bass of Robert McKinnon and Robert Mayson look on with impassive, unflinching, surkin stances. Although they cite the Stooges and Sonic Youth as influences, this is altogether darker.

REKS & WRECKS

KNIFE HITS

TUMULT CD

Reeks & Wrecks is US Army slang for 'Reconstruction & Rehabilitation Corps'. The name fits. From the boiled bones of backstreet blues and the trashcan rummaging of alleyway R&B emerges the skulking, shuffling soundtrack of Krule Hits. These are sounds that are always playing in a broken down downtown to lost souls with broken lives. Faltering, near light intrudes through thinned drapes. The floor jitters with bikers and their dames while the band blares through the raspberry-red "Fever Smoke". Skinny velefatidavan boy pests with lustful suspicion through fingers as wan dandies twirl and tease to the sit twang of "Dumbbuggy". The evening's passage conquers nerves and lays judgments to form romantic tritiation liaison as "Silverthorn" slides in a sad-eyed dawn chanson, blearily reconstitutes of the lives left behind, inter-metacolleges of past, present and future regress crowding against each other.

ROTHKO & CAROLINE ROSS

A PLACE BETWEEN

UD RECORDINGS CD

For London based musician Mark Beasley, bass is still the place. His love affair with the low end is supplemented by Caroline Ross's acoustic and

electric guitars, flute, and most importantly her vocals. Blessed with a voice of honest purity and lullaby softness, she brings humanity to the previously uninhabited world of Rothko. The sheer-sheer, spring, liveness high-fretted bass notes can achieve is a persistent mist, evocatively woven into the code of a reflective lament like "Divided Lives" or propelled throughout the broken down tocs song of "Bew". Elsewhere it is employed as a suffusing, rumbling drone, as omnipresent and inescapable as air or light, sustaining and enveloping everything around it, particularly in the second phase of "The Northern Lights Are Out".

TARENTEL

PAPER WHITE

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

BIG BLACK SQUARE

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

Last year's sprawling double CD We Move Through Weather represented only a fraction of the material Tarentel produced in those monumental sessions. These tracks add considerably to the San Francisco trio's vision. The Paper White EP collects four sparse and open examples of these-rock improvisation. "Dancer" ("Stable Straight") starts at a run with an agile bass working against lightning strike guitar harmonics before subsiding into a passage of organ and piano chords accompanied only by the hums of amps and distant swells of feedback. Two of the three other, shifter and untilted tracks play similar valves of sachil wash, the other springing more urgently to look at the world from a peak above the fog. The Big Black Square EP is a darker and bolder progression of these themes, an epically 44 minutes of raw-curtain percussions, occasional thunderclaps and growls of a storm, all sketched in the sunbeams greys of a weather-washed landscape. Both these EPs are available in combined form on a CD issued on the Human Highway label.

TRACKER

BLANKETS

FILMQUERIERO CD

Blankets is conceived as a soundtrack to Craig Thompson's graphic novel of the same name. The novel itself has achieved cult status, its simple narrative thread of sharing beds and blankets with family, friends and loves holding together a coming of age tale that has appealed far beyond the graphic novel's typical audience. The music captures the snowy landscapes of the story's Wisconsin and Michigan settings, from the shimmering and chinking guitar figures that pattern the opening instrumental of ("We Were") The trees" through the expansive "Static" as it unrolls over elegiac piano chords, to the lucid, crisp, simple white of "Snow". The album closes with its sole song, the lolling amanuensis of "Everything Is Beautiful", angelic pedal steel slipping the past into the future with a gentle supporting hand on the shoulder of youth enthused and emboldened by experience's early lessons. □

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

ATOM™

IMIX
LABORATORY INSTITUTE CO

Uwe Schmidt – aka Atom Heart, Señor Coconut, and a host of further aliases – often conceptualizes his diverse projects by putting himself in character. Señor Coconut (represented in photographs with the mustachioed mug of Gandy Jock) is a Latin band leader drawn to covers of Kraftwerk and classic rock. Now a forthcoming “complaint” sees Schmidt adopting the multiple personas of Ando House remade across the years.

On his Mix Me Up!, his Atom™ persona morphs to become a sort of digital Oil of Schmidt's many styles. From the stoned lounge-Casio version of “Oye Como Va” to the sunburned funk of “Sexuality,” Shunning consistency, the crossdancer is the here here, as the music cuts precariously between Acidic blips and noisy breakbeats, statusing IDM rhythms and Ge-Go cadences wrapped in cheesecloth and wax.

Unsurprisingly, all the vocals here are either computer-generated or vocoded, almost beyond recognition. For Schmidt, the pixel-mask doesn't just hide his true identity, it makes all faces (and voices) possible.

JASON FORREST/END LADIES GET IN FREE

BROOKLYN BEATS 12"

Jason Forrest aka Denna Summer jumps on his Prog stock and goes bonging through a sci-fi wasteland of faring Metal guitar solos, obsessively pecked breakbeats and more irregular time signatures that you'll find in the entire math-rock canon – and that's just on the first track, “Sky High.”

“To Each Their Own” does a bleep “Y’drill Y’drill” bass number on disco and “Sawg For My Grandmother” shreds a spinner in a player piano, bashing blocky chords until the whole thing goes up in jitterbugging flames stoked with, yes, more breakbeats. The drums may be a signature Forrest move but the tune is still one of the best he's ever come. On the B-side, banjoace bananachord (Charles Piche, aka George Marsteller) pushes his sampler to overheating, mashing up 80s percussion records, surf guitar, 40s vocal

groups and further elements that might seem kooky if they didn't fly by in such a blur. “Laptop A Go Go” sounds a bit like Oil Shadow's “Neakin' On The Motown,” off-rotting snarls and cool walking basslines; “Applejack Milk Punch” sounds a bit like a drill 'n' bass Crackhouse going to town on a cappella quartet. “Punjabi Merkin Beat,” despite its title, is only as Indian as the American casinos – all flesh and shine and cheese – its garish excess invokes.

KIKI

SO EASY TO FORGET REMIXES BRITISH CONTROL 12"

Berlin's British Control label has never shied away from the gaudiness – the synthesizers on records by Apparat and Ellen Allien are as swollen and opulent as anything in dance music today. And Kiki, aka Jeannen Ilys, seems determined to squeeze even more pounds of pressure into every vinyl groove than any of his colleagues have attempted.

“So Easy To Forget” swells with slightly out of tune Acid repetitions, blippy guitar figures, Goth vocals and dissonant, reverb charts. Like Thomas Anderson's “Name,” its gravitational pull is so strong that notwithstanding it feels, in contrast, like levitation. Kochi's Michi Doppel, aka Areal amts! Ads, uses vocodes, Superpitcher-style harmonic cushioning and her own resonant signature, drawn in obese buzz and crystalline bleeps, to light the path to the escape doors that open heavenward.

MOTOR

STUKA STUNT/JUNKER NOVAMUTE 12"

As much as their name sounds like a Pan Sonic or Reiter-Nester offshoot, Motor have no affiliations with those corps. Still, while they eschew stomp, energy feedback Techno, the duo (Bryan Black and Oliver Gasset, not to be confused with the artist who records as Motor for Audio.rif) appear to have listened closely to both the Finnish and German groups' records. “Stuka Stunt” begins with what might be the hacking cough of a sickly dot-matrix printer, sculpting it into a massively out-of-phase kickdrum and hi-hat rhythm before unleashing the floodgates with overdriven bass blasts and seasick oscillations.

It's a main-floor tune, sure, but it's a hell of a lot more apocalyptically inventive than any of the Scandinavian drum tracks with which it will be mixed in most big rooms.

“Junker” courts the same bleepy electro fetus that drives Rite The Dog's music, squealing with the abrasive, EBM-inspired accents that distinguish Black Strobe.

PANICO

SUBLIMINAL KILL TIGERSUSHI 9 CD

Panico's Tigersushi label has staked its whole career on complicating the question of genre. Under its umbrella, mutant disco, Neurokond and vintage Techno are all gathered as examples of a unified field of experimental dance music. Panico are certainly the most cross-cultural entity to enter into this field.

Presently based in Paris, they are a group of former Chilean punk rockers now crafting subtle dance tracks still informed by an inextricably funky rockers like The Fall and The Gun Club. Just as Maurice Fulton put a disco spin on 111's last album, Christian Vogel lends his production talents to swathe Subliminal Kill's bass-heavy grind in layers of feedback and distortion, punctured by need-toe handclaps and sandpaperly snare. Ticks like “Guerre Nucleaire”, courting along on low base repetitions, have the boomy tiered cloud formations, with gaping layers of separation between bass, drums, guitar and effects. Critics may charge that there's nothing new here, that dance-punk has run its course, that it's time for a new fix. But beyond their unusual backstory, Panico bring enough strangeness, derangement and humor (just listen to the Caribbean treatment they put on standard basement rock in “Maké It”) to earn their place near the top of the revolutionists' beaten ranks.

ALEX SMOKE

INCOMMUNICADO SOMA 12"

Even the staunchest Technophile may occasionally wonder if 4/4 dance music isn't reaching a point of diminishing returns, given the glut of by-the-numbers minimalism and Nth-generation Acid revival released every week. And

then along comes a record like this – and from a relative newcomer at that. Alex Smoke's debut album isn't radical in any way, but it assuredly combines the best elements of House and Techno's many sub-genres into a wonderfully waded, wonderfully flowing whole.

Smoke's talent lies not in his originality, but in his craft – the way he teases out a melody from a tangle of overlapping arpeggios, or injects a nominally straight four-to-the-floor pulse with just enough erratic energy to make it sound raw. Smoke is a sentimental – many of his synthesizer sounds take on the hazy, nostalgic quality of Boards Of Canada's meandering tones, and on “Chica Weppa”, the lead is a dead ringer for Violent Femmes' Depeche Mode. But that knack for tonal reference is a skill in its own right and of a piece with Smoke's larger project: to best his influences by becoming them. Harold Bloom might not like dance music, but he'd have to admire Smoke's Cedigal success.

VITALIC OK COWBOY RED CD

When Vitalic (France's Pascal Arbez) played a pre-Sonar party in Barcelona last summer, he delighted in pushing the sound system well into overdrive (and did the crowd, whose cheering was directly proportional to the clipping). Vitalic's debut album OK Cowboy displays more restraint than his in-the-red live appearance, but it's still absolutely enormous, yoking together elements of Daft Punk, Kompakt and Film-leaving electro-House acts like Black Strobe and Tiefland to create a sound thumping with bold analogue synthesizers and beefy rock drums.

All of the hallmarks of maximalist dance music are here – Acid squelches that esipend like sponges, shimmering harmonics that split the listener down the middle and flanging arpeggios that nod to the soif-fantaisie of Jean-Michel Jarre. However, it's not all pure bombast; “Repair Machines” features a falsetto vocal that might be sampled from Anne Pit, while the quixotic intro of “Polkahtanic” somehow manages to spin Banque courtneys. Reclining minimalism and steel drum/hybrids into a dazzling, and dizzying, unity. □

THEE SILVER MT. ZION MEMORIAL ORCHESTRA & TRA-LA-LA BAND HORSES IN THE SKY



DOUBLE LP OUT MARCH 7TH ON 180g DMM VINYL IN HAND-SCREENED JACKETS WITH MULTIPLE INSERTS AND AN ETCHING ON SIDE 4. CD OUT MARCH 21ST. DISTRIBUTED BY SOUTHERN/SRD CONSTELLATION CSTRRECORDS.COM

Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

OSSIE HIBBERT & THE REVOLUTIONARIES EARTHQUAKE DUB HOT POT CD/LP

Steve Barrow digs deep with this second release on Hot Pot featuring the relatively unknown (at least outside the Masonic lodges of reggae) singer and keyboardist Osbourne Hibbert, who should be given more props for his behind the scenes work of Channel One and Joe Gibbs. This is Hibbert's debut dub album; he later went on to produce Greg Iacouza's 'Mr Iacouza' set, together with his dub companion Leggo Dub. The title track is like an Dennis Brown's "Whip Them Jah" using The Royals' "Pick Up The Pieces" rhythm. Other recognizable staple sources include "Black Diamond" from Keith & Tex's "Sister That Train", "Colle in Dub", "Death Sentence" and "Kingsman", all derived from The Abyssinians' "Declaration Of Rights" and "Pain Land Dub" from "Rocky Ruler Is Georgia". There's a clutch of one way rhythms here but the majority of the set relies on versions of old rocksteady classics. A clearly built drum and bass-centred affair the likes of which we don't hear much these days.

MACKA FAT BEHIND THE COUNTER

BACKYARD CO

France's claim to be the centre of European reggae excellence is furthered by this excellent Dennis Bovell-produced effort from Macka Fat, who take their name from Jackie Mittoo's vintage Studio One album. The only gripe is the obviously lightweight fragile vocals, albeit improved when delivered in harmony. But the weakness is more than balanced out by the strength of the tunes as well as Bovell's arrangements and mixes, which place the sound squarely back in that rich early 80s vein somewhere between Sly & Robbie and the Ledville Grove sound of Aswad.

TOMMY MCCOOK REAL COOL TROJAN 2XCD

Whether Tommy McCook was actually the leader of the legendary Skatalites who knows, but what's certain is that the tenor saxophonist McCook was among the most innovative and influential Jamaican musicians during a generation of giants, and was present at nearly all of the many foundations tunes of both ska and reggae. Another graduate of Kingston's Alpha Cottage School, he began by touring with dance bands but would often abscond into the hills to participate in the freeform musical gyrations of Count Ossie and the informal collective of the Rasta drummers and chanters who gathered to mess. After The Skatalites burned out, he formed The Supersonics, house band at Duke Reid's Treasure Isle studio, and proceeded to create a series of rhythms that endure to this day on classic hits from artists such as Alton Ellis, Justin Hinds, The Techniques and The Paragons. In the 70s he became an essential component of the interchangeable brass section that drove the militant, jazzy or funky sounds

colouring roots reggae, notably in many classic Bunny Lee, Dosserer, Upsetta and Yabby You productions dubbed by King Tubby. This excellent collection concentrates on his rocksteady and reggae sides and together with the Heartbeat set issued a few years ago makes up as definitive an appraisal of this great talent as we could hope for.

PRINCE FAR I & CREATION REBEL MUNICH 1983 SOUNDBOARD CD/R

Among all the singers, DJs, vocal groups, musicians and producers of the golden age of roots reggae perhaps the best lived by the UK audience was Prince Far I – not so much a DJ in the classic style, but more a chanteur of words. For I carry a long way from Studio One and Joe Gibbs to working with Adrian Sherwood and co, even (on Cut It) Dub Encounter Chapter II) sharing credits with the likes of David Ieop, Steve Beresford and An-Up from The Sits. However, the tunes on this CD-R were recorded live from the soundboard at the Legio club in Munich in 1983, the year of his death. This little piece of reggae history is worth seeking out – the only extant recording of the DJ is with Sun Of Aqa and not really representative of his performances. Backing group Creation Rebel open up with some required preparations before Far I enters with "Big Fight" (aka "Dreadlocks Versus Babylon"), a bawling commentary delivered over Spear's "Ice Fizzer" rhythm and recorded for Joe Gibbs. That's followed by two U-O Sound staples, "Predigal Son" and "Viggin", the latter delivered straight to the head of Richard Bona. The sound is clean and crisp with a heavy bass return throughout the Prince's set, which closes with her-n-dingay style on "What You Gonna Do On Judgment Day", before Creation Rebel return with a mere serean "African Spaces".

ROOTS UNDERGROUND TRIBESMAN ASSAULT WACKYCOOL

Tribesman Assault made a brief appearance a couple of years ago and is back again. It's a reissue from around 1977 collecting Boyd "Brawdick" Barnes' early tunes recorded in Jamaica at a series of studios – Rarities, Black Ark and Treasure Isle – that prompted the building of the House of Wackies back in the Islands. Included are the rhythm tracks of the African Jamaicans' "Girl Of My Dreams" and Lynne Evans' "Dead Like Me", as well as versions of "Ballistic Affair" and The Righteous Flames' "I Wasn't Born Ba Lonely". Roots Underground are basically the early Wackies house group from back in Jamaica, Reckless Breed, who featured the guitar of a certain Jerry Hiles. These are nine dues in all, mostly versioning old and lesser known favourites, distinguished by some occasionally outrageous funkastic drumming from Jethi Scotty and Johnny Diaz. The set closes with the solo vocal, a reading of "Open The Gates" from KC White And The Loveys.

SLY & ROBBIE'S TAXI SOUND A CELEBRATION OF 30 YEARS OF TAXI RECORDS AURALUX CD/LP

This seems a strange release from Dave Katz and the Auralux people. It only feels like yesterday that Pressure Sounds put out their Unreleased Box selection. Whereas that set started with the Rhythm Twins' most sublime moment, this one ends with it – far be it from me to do anything other than heartily recommend any album that features The Taxidrivers' version of "Batman", the Randy Newman song perhaps best known for Nina Simon's version but taken to another level here. The 12" cut has an extended verse before we are hit with that sweetly aching harmony chorus that repeats into the dub together with a brass swell imported direct from heaven, in stark contrast to the song's bleak missage. The rest of the album collects other key cutouts from the late 70s and early 80s. General Echo is at his rampant best on "Drunkent Master", a salute to the early Jackie Chan kung-fu epic. Junior Deligado's stark depiction of piety on "Fair Augusta" is spurned on by an equally urgent rhythm and although "Revolution" is one of Dennis Brown's most focused cuts I always preferred the more triumphant "Pst 2".

VARIOUS BABYLON: ORIGINAL SOUNDTRACK CHRYSALIS CD

Hopefully, the release of this soundtrack CD heralds the 'soon come' appearance of Franco Rossini's film where the music played such a key role. It's only been available over the past few years in fleeting, quasi-bootleg versions and another viewing would help to re-evaluate its contribution to the sadly non-existent history of the sound system in UK. The revised album is something of a disappointment, though, especially the Dennis Bovell produced filler which merge from funny little Julie Forni harp-driven jazzy to peacock instrumental diversions best described as modest. Of course, the Yabby You and Aswad tunes have been revised over and over since the advent of digital times – even so "Warrior Charge" always manages to stir the blood. But it's Roy's "Whip'n Bop" II, a crossover stab at the then fresh street styles of NYC, that emerges with an enhanced reputation. On its first appearance, the album it came from was dismissed by both Hephaestus and roots fire.

VARIOUS DANCEHALL SESSIONS 86SESSIONS 2XCD

Ian McCann selects a set of juicy dancehall sounds from the mid-80s through to the following ten years sourced mainly from UK's now defunct Freshie imprint and the good offices of Tubby's Firehouse sparr Fatman. McCann rarely seems such duds these days – a shame as he always has a very angle on dancehall. Here, he shines in with a good analysis of dancehall in the steeneeves, a topic worthy of expansion. But back to the tunes, an equal mix of the ruff and righteous, pop and prance. There's a reminder

of the great lost soul voice of Frankie Paul on his take of Teri Teri Yone's modern R&B classic "Little Walter". And how easily the sucker music media dismissed a true original in Shabba Ranks, who delivers a lesson to the youth in "Must A Fi Learn". Topping off is dancefloor crusher "Zig It Up" from Flouagon & Ninjaman, clashing in 1989 on this totally mindless dance exhortation that imitates Aaron Neville's once sedate "Hercules" beatbox.

VARIOUS DOWN SANTIC WAY: SANTIC JAMAICAN PRODUCTIONS PRESSURE SOUNDS CD/DLP

A belated follow-up to Pressure Sounds' earliest release *Even Harder Shade Of Black*, featuring the roots rebel productions of Leonard "Santic" Chin. The album opens with two takes on Pablo's "Pablo In Dub", unusual in that the tune originated as an instrumental in the typical doo-wop style created by the Foundation melodic player, only to be rendered by Horace Andy, who added the lyrics to the new classic "Problems". It's version 2 to version throughout the set, beginning with *Find Freddie Molloy's* version and a Santic All Stars duet to Pablo's kung-fu movie track "Hap Ki Do". Then comes Jan Lloyd's great "Tent Shooter", containing the unforgettable line, "Not even the dog that piss against the wall of Babylon shall escape his [Jah's] wrath". The jewel for collectors is Gregory Isaacs as William Shakespeare (sic) on "Lie At Night" – proring, in a disarmingly off key delivery, why he was so irresistible. But best of all is the under-recorded Paul Whiteman, aka Paul Blackman, manager of Augusta Fabio, crooning the simple plaint: "I Don't Want To Lose You" over a delicate Public Utilities line. Set to be one of the compilations of the year.

VARIOUS ROUGH GUIDE TO DUB WORLD MUSIC NETWORK CO

This is a dub prime sourced from the Blood & Fire catalogue. It makes sense as, together with Peter Dalton, the label's Steve Barrow is co-author of the Rough Guide to Reggae, still the best place to find your way through this most tortuous of musical genres. Dominating proceedings is King Tubby of course, plus student Prince Jammy and Phillip, Scratch The Upsetter, the late Eek! Eek Thompson and Crucial Bunny from Channel One. The only fresh track on the set is alone worth the price of entry: "Behold A Dub" by Amenta All Stars. King Tubby is from Larry Black & White's Marshall production and has Tubbs in one of his more vicious moods – he obviously kicked the dog on the way out that morning. "Noah Sugar Pan" is probably the most laudable dub appened out by The Upsetter from the magnificent Congos – soon to return to Blood & Fire with a brand new album, "General Version" is Jammy's brutal strip of Dennis Brown's "Want To Be No Greater" and there are top contributions from Yabby You, Gien Brown and Keith Hudson. A great tool for converting dub heathens. □

Electronica

Reviewed by Ken Hollings

BELVEDERE MOUNTAIN EXPRESS

THROUGH SULPH'ROUS NIGHT
PIGEONHOUSE CD

Operating through their own Pigeonhouse label, Belvedere Mountain Express are an unassuming duo comprising Howard Goodman in charge of programming and production, who also writes most of the music, and lyricist Vicki Gobin on occasional voxals. The sequel to their 2003 debut, *A View in the Blue Belltower*, is a gently inventive collection of melodies, scattered percussion and occasional samples lifted from Eastern European films and shortwave broadcasts. The inclusion of live cicadas on "Where the White Mulberry Trees Grow" and field beds on "The Town Beneath the Sea" indicates a talent for sensitive phonographic excursions.

BITSTREAM

DOMESTIC ECONOMY ?
MODERN LOVE CD

You know something's wrong when the first proper album from brothers Steve and Dave Conner under their Bitstream alias is actually shorter than an earlier CD collection of past 12" tracks. Despite their gestures towards household efficiency and clean minimalism, the Conner boys don't sound like they throw very much away. The line of averages means that when it works, as on the fractured pulsating "Bass Lobe", the scraggly Acid beats of "Orange Room" and the magnificently gaiky "Skymon", there's plenty to enjoy. When it doesn't, however, all you're left with is plenty, which is also a polite way of saying "more than enough".

CHRIS BOCAST

THROUGH THE AIRLOCK
DIVERTED ARTS CD

With titles like "Chained Radio Drifting", "Ice Cauldron" and "Cold Sleep", it's clear that the collective of Ambient space pieces from the lead guitarist of Colorado group Boardgame is more concerned with the inhositable depths that lie beyond the airlock door than the cozy confines that it helps to protect. Drawing upon heavily modified guitar effects, piano, Moog and E-bow, Bocast invokes measureless distance, nameless configurations and impassive bodies moving at

their own unmeasurable speeds. Unable to match so vast a scale, it feels as if no human hand could ever have a place here, except that humanity's fingerprints are all over everything

BUILD BUILDINGS

THERE IS A PROBLEM WITH MY
TAPE RECORDER
BUILD BUILDINGS CD

For those who find the delicate perpetual clutter of this world just too fascinating for words, Brooklyn-based musician, scientist and philologist Ben Tweed has created a cycle of songs without vocals that may well be worthy of your attention.

Using mythic painstakingly assembled from household sounds, customised drum patches and random intrusions, he creates music to accompany the slow accumulation of dust in corners, the passage of clouds across windows and the gentle ebb and flow of the coffeeemaker working away in the kitchen. The way Tweed's pieces accept the proliferation of such tiny moments without complaint or comment should make it recommended listening for agoraphobes everywhere.

CEX STARSHIP GALACTICA

TEMPORARY RESIDENCE CD

Originally released in such minute quantities by the UK's 555 Recordings label and in a wimpishly paper cover guaranteed to fall easy victim to the ravages of time, Ryan Kiedell's second album marked his radical transition from the studly laptop tweaks of his *Rail Model* debut on Kid606's Tigerbread label to the snotty B-boy pop genius of his 2003 *Bring Riddim* project. So what you get the second time around is the elegant threading of Hip hop beats with light-fingered acoustic guitars on "Get In Ya Squads", the sepihonic humour but great girl-on-girl action of "Hi Scores", plus seaful instruments like "Cex Can Kiss My Soft Senusas Lips" and the blunted Commodore 64 madness of the title track.

This release also comes with three remastered bonus tracks, rumoured to be the earliest songs composed on the Cex computer way back in 1996.

ELECTRONICAT VOODOO MAN

DISK'D B CD

"You need flesh," Fred Bigit repeats over and over on the chorus to "Fresh And Accessories", reminding us in this apparent plug for a household cleaner of the sound linguistic reasons why the French can't do rock. Well, not with a straight face anyway. Meanwhile, the drum machines, shimmering psychobilly guitars and trash affectations of Electroniac's previous album for Disk'D, *21st Century Jay*, are all still in place. Bigit also gets severe props for his John Zacherle impersonation during the middle eight of "Doris Les Bots", which is actually about wearing leopard skin and being lost in the jungle. Alive or dead, Posion by and Lux Interer would be spinning in their graves.

GAVOUNA STINGS AND DUM MACHINES

ARIALE CD

Hard not imagine a few peaceful Sunday afternoons spent curled up with the sequel to Athens-born installation artist Athanasios Arganias's first release under his Gavouna alias – 2003 *Worm Industry EP* for Manchester's Melodic label. Under cover of Konrad Kühner's steady array of strings, Arganias creates hazy acoustic acoustic textures on the basic Techno template, check out the consistently regulated bass running through the closing moments of "Three" or the steely glesandi built into the instrumental ballad "Italica" (1929). At times the subtle intricacies and sultry tempos of tracks like "Loo & Lydia" and "Treyer" recall House, but generally Arganias's compositions display an artistry all their own.

TOMOROH HIDARI THE NECROPHONICON

ISOLATE CD

Reflecting the mythic seepage emanating from HP Lovecraft's fictional universes with openers "Miss Chulhu 1984" and "Tentacle Bellet", Viennese composer Oliver Stammer gives way to his dark imaginings as "decomposor" Tomoroh Hidari. Helping him out are various voices of the dead including German-language rapper Kamp MC on the belligerently freeform "Rue De La Gack".

Kristina Fogg's dislocated vocalism, locked in with some classic electronica samples on "Miss Demers" and the incisive technological beechat of "Bleste For The 10th Planet". Stammer shows considerable diversity and inventiveness in his approach, creating phonic effects that are more quick than dead.

KODA MOVEMENTS

INFRACORE CD

The task to this one is to bypass all tendencies towards coarseness and stiffness that the bucolic imagery and titles with which M Denick's first album for Disk'D's InfraCore label has been presented and crank the volume up. A short series of single-handed meditations on a single cluster of tones, their overpitching, phasing and resonating works better, conveying a deeper sensation of peace the louder they get. The sustained chirring and blurring that occurs on each piece, producing an increasing sense of depth and shadow as they proceed, gives physical presence to suspension, allowing humans to assume the form that suits it best.

PASTACAS TSACA TSAP

KOHRYREL CD

Singing in a blend of native Estonian, Finnish and his own private language, Raimo Teder has recorded an album of remarkable charm and invention. Deeply textured vocals and nimble guitars fragment gently and then recombine into delicate shapes and patterns. Teder does not so much write songs as capture an array of fleeting moments. A track like "Kurkaid" can suddenly fly apart into random keyboard runs; "Viel Vuuval" releases its effects at different speeds; "Ylikson Kuopung" treats its harmonies and contrapuntal bassline with offhand relish.

The majority of these pieces, which fit neatly into the collection's 44 minute 44 second running time, were recorded in the tiny village of Kyrkjikala, on Finland's west coast, where the mornings are exactly 33 minutes and 33 seconds longer than in the rest of the world. So now we know what some of them do with all that extra time. □

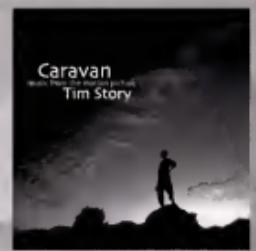
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Caravan
music from the motion picture
Tim Story



Global

Reviewed by Richard Henderson

STEVEN FELD

THE TIME OF BELLS 2: SOUNDSCAPES OF FINLAND, NORWAY, ITALY & GREECE
WORLD CD

As an ethnographer, Steven Feld's best known fieldwork has centred on the melodic weeping of tribesmen from Papua New Guinea; published in collections such as *Voces Of The Rainforest* (360°/Rhymes) and the commanding triple disc *Boszai* (Smithsonian Folkways), his findings enhanced mycobiology and Deadheads alike. Of late, Feld's ear has been attracted by metzophones, often those pealing over the European countryside. In the wake of the soundscape disc he created to accompany Bright Balkan Morning (a study of music in Greek Macedonia) and the initial Time Of Bells recordings from France, Finland and Greece, comes a second volume.

This time out, Feld investigates the carillon of a Finnish cathedral along with its choir accompanied by handbells. The sounds of the steeples bells are seated in the context of their landscape, birdong and ambient miasma being much in evidence. Similar bells from a Norwegian cathedral segue into a lengthy shambra brass bell performance overlapping in turn with an open air U.S. costumed bellringers from an Italian village then chime alongside zapponga bagpipes. Rounding out the instalment, the fevered participants of a goat dance on the Greek island of Skyros hold their own in volume against Hiphop beats levelling from a neighbouring club; the recordist takes brief respite in a neighbourhood bar, and finds scufful rembetika stylings, which wind up here as well.

ALI AHMED HUSSAIN & MAILAL NAG JUGALBANDI – SITAR & SHEHNAI DUET
RHyme CD

Thanks to the efforts of Ustad Bismillah Khan in the mid-20th century, the double-reed shehnai migrated from its traditional perch over the entrways to temples and entered India's classical canon as a respectable interpreter of raga. Only one other exponent of that instrument can be seriously considered a successor to Bismillah Khan, and that's the woefully under-recorded Ustad Ali Ahmed Hussain Khan. Of the latter's few available discs, both limited availability and eccentric production techniques have hindered wider knowledge of his talent. Jugalbandi presents Ali Ahmed Hussain in duet with sitarist Mailal Nag, both men shitting throughout their exploration of a single late night raga captured in a pristine recording of a 1998 concert in Lawrence, Kansas, the former stomping ground of Beat author William Burroughs. The star's steady harmonics are notably transparent and crystalline here, the perfect foil for Ali Ahmed Hussain's penetrating, the perfect foil for Ali Ahmed Hussain's penetrating tenor. The latter's breath control is worthy of marvel in itself. Among Hussain's signature touches is his exhausting sustain of a single note at the code of a complex passage; immediately prior to that note's termination, on the pale cusp

of audibility, Hussain will a bow on the package with a brief, carefully tempered burst of emanation. This device never fails to impress. One could imagine Hussain only making a more galvanising impact by squirting lighter fluid on the shehnai and torching it. He is that good.

MUSTAFA KANDIRALI HOW TO MAKE YOUR HUSBAND A SULTAN: BELLYDANCE WITH ÖZEL TÜRKBAS
TRADITIONAL CROSSEBORDS CD

Producer and label proprietor Harold Hagopian has been careful to balance archival issues of Turkish and American music with new releases on his otherwise splendid Traditional Crossebords label. On its surface a seemingly camp example of the former, *How To Make Your Husband A Sultan* introduced a stellar 1960s ensemble led by dandarist Mustafa Kandirali to American audiences in an instructional package designed to enhance, as Hagopian notes, "that swing-a-staple, the art of domestic seduction". To this end, step-by-step sequential photography – also reproduced in the CD booklet – enlightened housewives to the subtleties of belly dance and fiery cymbal accompaniment, as practised by the comely Özel Türkbas. Though the sinuous woddwind solos introducing several selections justify the price of admission to themselves, the band overall exhibit a light touch and routine interplay which transcend considerations of timeliness. The 17 minute raka-shake opus "Özel's Dance Muza" shows the group to best advantage, as Kandirali and company progress through the increasingly frenetic moods of a complete dance routine. Played in some 160,000 American households at the time of its initial release, this pardour selection probably culminated with tasse and a cigarette.

EMELINE MICHEL RAISIN KREYOL
TIMES SQUARE CD

Haiti's Emeline Michel matches well beyond the compass of her homeland, and creates a personal, pan-Caribbean statement over the dozen tracks of *Raisin Kreyol*. Though her forays into reggae feel less assured, this hardly compromises her otherwise successful fusion of Antillean bagpipe and other island flavours within a studio-introspective presentation. Given her ambition to conjure slick pop from noisy Afocastan borrowings, Michel comes to resemble an equatorial relative of Jimenez's Mortal Sebasztian. Her commanding vocal range is further enhanced by multitracking, fortunately, wherever production linearity threatens to posture her musical crescendo, a rhythmic laminate of corgas and kit drums provides a forcible reminder of the earthiness central to her song craft. One misses the raucous and drive of Coupé Soca, a group which embodied an earlier era of Hériti's music, but is nonetheless glad for another contribution from an important and often overlooked region, whose economic woes are in inverse proportion to its artistic worth.

MANUEL GUAIJIRO MIRABAL BUENA VISTA SOCIAL CLUB PRESENTS MANUEL GUAIJIRO MIRABAL
WORLD CIRCUIT CD

The latest entry in the Buena Vista franchise is an esteemed solo effort by the group's trumpeter, Manuel Guajiro Mirabal. The solo artist designated for the author of this tribute to legendary innovative Cuban bandleader Arsenio Rodriguez is questionable only in that Mirabal's renditions of "Pan Balón El Martiano" so closely resemble the original recordings that one suspects the hand of Rodriguez reaching from beyond the grave to direct the current proceedings in Havana's Egrem Studios. The jolting similarities between old and new are underscored by the moment appearance of a storming collection of original Rodriguez cuts, *El Rey Del Sol Mantano* (Rico). As cited in John Stewart's *The Latin Tinge*, Rodriguez was created with importin' mambo rhythms from Congolese-derived religious sects in Cuba; Mirabal's stunning performances reflect the same African influence that Rodriguez brought to bear, first within his native island and then on groups influenced by the 1950s roots to New York, where Rodriguez compositions are still staples of current salsa repertoire.

Mirabal, along with many of the key players from the Buena Vista sessions (among them "Cachorro" Lopez, whose eponymous solo disc was as forward-looking as Mirabal's is rooted in the past), captures the bonhomie and verve that endowed the sun montane style to all within earshot. That, coupled with any appearance by Cuba's premier surf guitarist, Manuel Galban (last heard in due with Buena Vista producer Ry Cooder on *Mambo Siempre*), is a spur to joy.

ALI FARKA TOURÉ RED & GREEN
WORLD NETWORK CD

The sixth of a string of albums first issued in Europe, *Red* was responsible for generating interest in the blues-influenced guitar playing and songs of Mali's Ali Farka Touré as the 80s began. Now remastered and issued in tandem with another long-unavailable album, 1988's *Green* (both discs evidently named for the colour of their original sleeves), it showcases a considerable development and sophistication in Touré's art, despite both records containing sporadic arrangements for acoustic guitar and cabassou percussion. The signature guitar figure introducing the classic *Metawu* ("My Girl") provides the generative stem cells for "La Drogue", which leads off *Red*, the corroboree and release of tension intrinsic to that famous phrase eddies through the rest of the album as well. Both albums equal the naked intensity of Touré's later electric collections, such as his 1999 studio effort, *Maliakal*, and the Islamic-orientated melodies of both are cut from the same cloth as the material from his earlier five releases, selected tracks from the latter comprising 1996's archival *Radio Mali*. As the singer/guitarist has effectively retuned from recording and concert

performance, these final entries in his discography, bluesy and irresistibly swinging, are doubly welcomed.

VARIOUS THE ROUGH GUIDE TO BOOGALOO
WORLD MUSIC NETWORK CD

Though slightly lacking the all-killer no-filler punch of 1987's *Dave Hause-curated We Got Latin Soul!* (Caliente/Char), this most recent effort to chronicle late 60s Latin pop is equally comparable and necessary. As compiled by Sue Stewart, this salsa maven (and co-founder of *Cubanismo* magazine), *The Rough Guide To Boogaloo* shoves several artists, but only one took (Joe Cuba's "Ole! Ole!") with that earlier album. On all collections, the same characteristics abound: traditional Latin rhythms infused with the energy of then-current R&B and psychedelic rock, lyrics often sung in English, tambores-dominated horn sections.

A comparatively brief though effervescent moment, boogaloo gave Hispanic teenagers their own sound, giving rise to numerous dance crazes and, ultimately, the birth of salsa as it is known today. Core performers, such as Ray Barretto, Tito Puente or Willie Colón, reflected pop culture through a Latin prism; Barretto's "A Deeper Shade Of Soul" lent much-needed funk to Procol Harum's hit, as did the Gilberto Sestot with The Young Rascals' "Good Lovin'" and Bobby Valentino scored with a loose-limbed interpretation of the theme from *Wiseacre's* *Batman*. Throughout, cowbells, bongos and vibraphones define the armature of good times, as probably seemed endless prior to the music's eclipse in the early 70s.

VARIOUS THE SPANISH RECORDINGS: BASQUE COUNTRY: NAVARRE ROUNDER SELECT CD

One of a pair of discs collecting Alan Lomax's recordings made in 1952, during which time the indelible Lomax taped musical styles even then evaporating from the Spanish-Franch border region. Down through history, the Basque country has served as a throughway to the Iberian Peninsula; it has also been the preferred access for invaders during several eras, with the resulting enrichment of local culture providing some compensation for being repeatedly overrun. The tapes Lomax made in the face of intolerance from the Franco régime contained bensolismo (improvised verses sung in public), jota nevara and other songs of aranç or aranç, often with irregular metres, performed at a leisurely pace. Instrumental backing could include rudimentary recordings of the oboe-like dulzaina and the diatonic accordion known as trikitixa. These familiar with Tony Gatlif's feature films containing gypsy musicians, such as *Venga o Gadjé Dile* will worm to the piercing veils and roiling performances captured herein. The lyrics, sung by musicians of the Navarre region, are a varied lot, and include a spot of sed-gated falsetism: "There is nothing more beautiful/for me/beautiful/fool foot, beautiful/slow/Fine ankle..." □

HipHop

Reviewed by Dave Tompkins

LOREZ ALEXANDRIA BALTIMORE ORIOLE JAZZMAN 1"

For an instant, a post of feathers hung over the grass between home and mound, result of an errant bird getting creamed by a Randy Johnson fastball. Chicago jazz singer Lorez Alexandria probably wouldn't have minded putting a heartbreak beatbox between the eyes of the "two-string blockheads" she laments in this sparse chiller recorded in 1957 and again in 1963. Two of its versions appear here, cheap, without disrupting your PayPal account. The flute chaps lonely in a bare tree while the hit-hat rides out the winter. "No time for a ride to be dragging her feathers in the snow". Spring is soon. And Randy's out in Arizona, bean-peeling his uniform.

AMERIE ONE THING PRIMO 12"

Even of crap side R&B have programmed us to freak out whenever a real live song that Biggie didn't already use occasionally shows up. Otherwise, this is just a means to impulse-buy the damn looks and get out of Fleet Locker. But Roth Harrison's pitched guitar blinks and elephant herd on drums recently had everyone asking for a dive with the last name. Even weirder are the looks you get when pitching it as "by the same guy who did 'Crush in Love'". Two friends — Sun Ra friend and The Fall friend — both shock their heads but made sure they had a copy before leaving my apartment, while another threatened to pummel me into a toad wallet if I didn't retrieve his promised copy from the former. Luckily for me and Ted, Kilian Kutz named a bootleg with an instrumental and another with a Jay-Z phoner between verses. Talib Kweli opened his show with it — good for Amerie, bad for Kweli's album. This may be the closest the Sasquatch supermodels ever get to The Motels.

EDAN BEAUTY AND THE BEAT LEWIS CD/LP

Good news comes in a robot walking a dog. Ripping through Ida Podorof's (real name) essential "new trap" robot book, it ran into the

Gert dog walk photo that Edan Porteray (real name) pediced for his Primitive Plus album. Since then, the Bostonian formed some distance fuzz and watched '70s bug movie *The Molepeople Chronicle*. That big ugly bug ball inspired him to "trick in the sand with a colony of ants" on "Making Planes" with Mr. Lt, my favorite rap song so far this year. Swapping bike for effects pedal, *Beauty And The Beat* is a psychedelic bloodletting. Space isn't between songs, it's sprawled on the floor, searching the ceiling fissures for The Del's "I Can Sing A Rainbow [Love Is Blue]". Edan's the "N'vour com plonker". His favorite color is maths and his favorite maths problem is purple. How improved, he kind of sounds like OC if OC talked about pieces of dog shit hanging wings, put nomenclature on the axiomatic set and showed chromatographic appreciation for Herbert Zim's *Golden Field Guide*. Daga, "the flame thrower fascinator", sounds a few sheets to the spectrum himself. Still, anyone who shoots their TV and even bakes the warts out of their *Top Chefs* *Clique 12* is OK by me.

PREFUSE 73 FEATURING GHOSTFACE & EL-P HIDEYAFACE WIMP 12"

El-P's backyard is a barfing of woods, npqz and ivy, overseen by plastic turtle amputees and a haunted bird hotel leaning on a fence. The main attraction was a standing garden claw, a brown handle with a dead spider clutch that's been wrenched a lit to hell by visiting rappers. El-P's "Hideyaface" remix sounds like his backyard. Replace garden claw with a mangled guitar and some gloom coming in off the water. Prefuse's backyard has a rusty space bell clang, "ringing out to dry" by Tony Starks and El-P. Ghost brings about robe softness while El-P rounds out with a busted castle post. They sound good together, like it took place in the studio and not the post office. Garden Claw makes a good case in the winter. Long live the claw.

THE PRESENCE MEMBERS ONLY EP UNCOMMON CD

Recent progressive HipHop has much in common with the rhetoric of a gospel preacher — and

Bush politics which preach to the converted; hollowed, un-ruined lyrical deliveries admitting no degree of human weakness. Antioch's Pedestrian even has a gospel after ego that seems to ascend to the pulpit to deliver sermons. On The Members Only EP following up a debut 12" on Def Jux, New York duo The Presence introduce themselves in this mode of thunderous, dogmatic conviction. Stressing their independence from the mainstream with slogans of "we're still here", "we are", "we're alive and well", they claim to be "the last of a dying breed", yet the evident political discontent doesn't distinguish them from an underworld of political malcontents that extends all the way to Kerry-voting soccer moms. As The Presence start trawling deep in the psyche rather than just lecturing, the lyrics becomes more defined, the MCs less interchangeable, and the production becomes equal to the ante. A name of "Razer Fund" (a posse cut of breading, black hummed R&B that was originally a Def Jux 12") places a stinging backdrop like twinkling city lights behind a skitter tick-tock beat, slowing it down like a trained heartbeat, as guest Vast Aire fires Cannibal Ox vents his spleen through body humor: "Oh will slash the cold vein, let it drain out/sorts like Aztecs, eat your heart out". MC/producer Nasir's resume includes engineering Cannibal Ox's *Cold Venin*, and he achieves a similar chop-drop of controlled paranoia on the Members Only EP. The rhetoric itself seems standard issue, but the underlying logic is satisfyingly unorthodox. (Derek Hahnsey)

QUASIMOTO THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF LORD QUAS STONES THROW CD/LP

A Mod hotel room in São Paulo is equipped with SP-1200, 300, CD, player, Biga Bunny portable, beer and a wave of Brazilian record shopping. Impromptu megamix follows, including a revision of Nucleus' "Jani De Revenge" that has the Waka fubiks snaking balloons with Lord Quas. From this sort of process, more production than ADD-ing, came an unleashed lit of CD-Rs called *100 Beats In A Week*, some of which were earmarked for the guy whose tool belt is festooned with wended latex armlets. Is it

possible that we haven't heard from Lord Quas in five years despite Modib's prolific output since? Further Adventures retains the mystique though at times you catch yourself thinking Quas is Modib in a yellow bandana just out from a separate career. We saved his best hints for this 28-track argument for legibility. There's NFL, Film, a bottomed-out tape by Just-Ice, an Eastwood ice pack on a Nasu snow gondola, a screwed dog growl over a comet shoot-out. Reclusive during interviews, Modib is most at ease rambling among his records. From analogue dubs to blue-sing jazzies and General Goatheat, it's less sense incoherence, more thought-reeling. MF Doom redeems another sour bell dispenser on "Cleaser", if Deen and Ghostface are really doing an album together, they should pay Modib for some Quas intruders. They deserve to breathe, or at least inhale.

SPYDER D BIG APPLE RAPPIN MINTROCK 12"

A local record store just lugged into a collection of school jam tins donated by the late Mastermen's mother. Nurses spotted that deserved to be on recent *Skijump*, Nutt Nut and some guy called Teetleton. Name that appeared on flyer, record and on stage in a Spiderman costume performing "Sneepies Dance". Spyder D. Imagine the duo — Spyder D and Skijump. Think of the giggle and mask potential. *Skijump* *Dame Hughes* D of Hollis, Queens had a classic old school for trapper's barton. Discovered by Vaughan Mason and then Russell Rush, Spyder had his fates written out all over the instrumental to "Bounce, Rock, Skate & Roll". Unfortunately, that demo never came out. While Vaughan helped him out of contractual snags, Spyder cut the superb *Woodie* "Big Beat Classic" for West End under his red man manager's sobriquet, B+. As far as house band parties go, "Big Apple Rappin" is every bit as good as "Supernepk". It's as New York as Esko-fax but was made in Detroit, when Spyder was in school. Lucky for our pockets, it's been bootlegged with an instrumental called "Nipple". It would be nice if Spyder D saw something from it. □

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Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Andy Hamilton

JIM BAKER

MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS

DELMARK CD

The solo debut by Chicago pianist/synthesist Jim Baker previously heard in contexts ranging from Brad Stearn with Guillermo Grainger, via Ken Vandermark's groups, to rock collaborations. These freely improvised solo pieces — he plays piano on all but the three tracks for "unique" ARP 2000 analog synthesizer — were intended to have a "somewhat or somehow tuneful" character. "Watching the Interstate" and "Post Industrial Societies And Their Precursor" are very few flowing and tuneful, in contrast, while not exactly bluesy and swinging, "It Still Mame If They're Dead" and "Boiled Decapit" refer to those traditional virtues. On piano, the results are dark, isolated and quietly compelling. The three pieces for synth are quite different — spiky cold-futurist, exploring the aural possibilities of the instrument.

FIERNSYN FIERNSYN

FIERNSYN FIERNSYN

MINTH WORLD MUSIC CD

Fiernsyn Fiernsyn, founded in Copenhagen in 2001, are Andrias Færre and Tobias Fuglsang on guitars, Jøn Land on bass and Tolle Teitze Mortensen on drums and electronics. With nods in free jazz, avant rock, noise and droneform, their debut, they say, features "superimposed rock 'n' roll guitar riffs pounding to the sites at 100 mph and melodic contemporary chance music". Tracks are simply numbered "Nr 1" to "Nr 11". There's melody alongside and sometimes on top of the pounding riffs, though the quiet plangency of "Nr 4" for say, guitar duet allows Land to take a rest from squalls of overwhelming, very stimulating.

JONATHAN GEE / DANILO GALLO / ALESSANDRO MINETTO

THE CREAM OF MANDARINS

ARTESUONO CD

British pianist and composer Gee, with Gallo on bass and Minetto on drums, recorded this fine album in a studio in Udine, Italy. Gee is intensely melodic, a real improviser not a pattern player, who deserves the epithet "the English Keith Jarrett" because of the similarities in soundworld

and influences from outside jazz tradition. He improvises more rationally, though, like Thelonious Monk. His rhythmic and lyrical signature is so strong, he makes compositions by others sound like his own, just as Monk did. "Cradles", for instance, sounds like a Gee original, though it's in fact by drummer Wenzel; "Velvet Cloud" and "Whitstone", like all Gee's compositions, are more than a set of blowing changes, and have a strong motivic identity. The two are loose but together, and follow the traditional three minute track length — not a note is wasted. This is probably Gee's finest disc to date.

TORD GUSTAVSEN

THE GROUND

CRIMSON CD

Following up the excellent 2003 debut *Changing Places*, the Norwegian pianist again offers melancholy, even funeral minimalism in the company of bassist Harold Johnson and Superlent drummer Jarle Vespestad. He describes his pieces as often like "wordless hymns", growing out of blues or gospel tradition, and there's a kinship with Keith Jarrett's lyrical, though without the mythic exuberance. It doesn't sound like Gustavsen is working up a sweat or what is a very focused recording — haunting, atmospheric and austerely beautiful. Ambient jazz.

FRED HESS

CROSSED PATHS

TARPISTY CD

Recorded in Denver, Colorado, but as hot (and cool) as anything from more established centres, this two-horn, bass and drums set is the latest in a masterly series by tenor Fred Hess. Born 1941 in Rochester, New York, he studied with Phil Woods, Gunther Schuller and Lou Harrison, and has been a well-kept secret out West for too long. *Crossed Paths* is his second release with Ron Miles (trumpet), Ken Filiano (bass) and the great Matt Wilson (drums), following last year's excellent *The Long and Short Of It* (also on Tarpistry). The lack of chordal instrument has obvious echoes of Ornette Coleman, and intricate ensemble interaction and quirky themes, all by the leader, are hallmarks. Hess has a shrewd tenor style, but for someone at the

front end of jazz, his tone is beautiful, the model! Steve Young. He's reminiscent of Horne Marsh in his virtuosity in the altissimo register, and his love of counterpoint with trumpet. While Hess's flurries float very free of the beat, avoiding traditional emphasis on groove and blue notes, trumpeter Ron Miles is more in the pocket but equally impressive. Hess's beauty often left me wanting more; he's succinct on "Funkhouse", a jazzy blues, but stretches out on "Kronvit For Taxa". From his photo you'd guess he was an accountant, but Hess is a real jazzbo — and I think a great one.

JOHN STEVENS/

TREVOR WATTS/

BARRY GUY

MINING THE SEAM: THE REST OF THE SPOTLITE SESSIONS

CRIMSON CD

The follow up to *No Fear*, from the same 1977 sessions on Spotlite and reissued on CD on the same label in 2002. British drummer John Stevens was one of Improv's real thinkers and teachers, who coined the term "freebop" to refer to his development of the "time no changes" approach of Miles Davis's later 60s groups. This freebop has the power and fury of free Improv laid mostly over a groove. With Barry Guy on bass and Trevor Watts on alto, compositions are by Stevens and Watts. From the opening alternative take of "No Fear", this is full-on playing, passionate in its intensity. Double bass is one of a few instruments in which mastery is possible across Improv and composed music, and Barry Guy is a real virtuoso in both — he's all over the instrument, and in many ways is the most outstanding soloist.

TRIO X: JOE MCPHEE / DOMINIC DUALV / JAY ROSEN

THE SUGAR HILL SUITE

CRIMSON CD

In one sense a characteristic CRIMP release by Joe McPhee's very fine, long-established trio with Dominic Duval on bass and Jay Rosen on drums, *Sugar Hill* is unusual both for its material and its melodic interest and reference to grooves. It's also another example of the multi-instrumentalist husbanding his resources — here

he just sticks to tenor sax. Duke Ellington's "Drop Me Off In Harlem" and Freddie Hubbard's "Little Sunflower" are both unexpected titles, and while the first is jaunty, the latter gets a surprisingly drupe-like reading. The two sprightly, "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child" and "Goin' Home", are staples of the saxophonist's repertoire and each receives a haunting interpretation.

TWO SOUNDS ENSEMBLE

INVERSIONS

CRIMSON CD

The duo TSE is Stefan Wistrand on tenor and soprano sax and Isolde Simonsson on piano, and came into existence in 2002 with the idea of playing jazz standards. But pure improvisation took over and they "always begin in the unmade and concluded in the unfinished", as the sleeve nicely puts it. The approach is melodic, mostly untroubled and in a free tempo — the piano tone is bright and the reverb well projected.

YO MILES!

UPRIVER

CRIMSON RUMBLE 3CD

Less cutural and problematic than Branford Marsalis's re-creation of *A Love Supreme*, *Upriver* is the second *Caravane* release by Yo Miles, formed by guitarist Horne Kater and trumpeter Leo Smith in 1998 to explore Miles Davis's mid-70s electric music. Here they've assembled an all-star cast with Mike Kenealy and Chris Mur on electric guitars, Michael Manring on bass, Steve Smith on drums, Karl Perazzo on percussion, Greg Olsby and John Tchicai on sax, and Tom Coster on keyboards, plus on some tracks, Zakir Hussain on tabla, Dave Greener on guitar, and the Rova Six Quartet. Upriver has a grittier edge than *Say Garden*, though Greg Olsby, also added, provides a cooler focus. In addition to Miles Davis pieces such as "Blues Brew" and "Aghast", there's an original Smith composition and a group improvisation. On "Aghast Funk", tenorist John Tchicai duels with the trumpeter — there's more group interaction than on the originals — while on "Festerbank", Smith shows his Miles antecedents with some muted solos. A fine tribute to Miles Davis's "Tunck collective", beautifully recorded. □

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Outer Limits

Reviewed by Edwin Pouncey

COH

0397POST-POP

MEGCO 2XCD

COH is Russian electronic musician Ivan Pavlov whose attitude leans more towards the Russian avant garde than Western rock and pop. That said, there's a lot of rocking and popping in evidence on this double disc set, as well as a contagious sense of fun. Disc A (03) is made up of a live mix of new recordings, which Pavlov originally planned to release as his next studio album. Recorded partly in Austria in 2003, the set opens with "De Koto Rap", a blared thumping of electronic wings and glitched robot-rhythm where the voice of Mis Fanez – as heard on Krzysztof Kameński's title theme for Roman Polanski's 60s Satanic shocker *Rosemary's Baby* – drifts in and out of focus. Further along, "Untitled Smash HIT" number out of the speakers like a spiker Perrey and Kingsley synthesized pop anthem that later evolves into a total Techno stamp before returning to Fanez's haunting lullaby. Disc B (97) is a release of COH's first release, which was originally issued in an action of seven copies and given to friends; it offers a rare opportunity to hear Pavlov at his rawest, and discover how his early minimalist approach to electronic music has progressed without losing any of the humour and wilful obscurity that made it special.

SETH CLEUETT

MY OWN THOUSAND SHATTERINGS

SEDIMENTAL CD

The third track of this work by New York installation artist Seth Cleutt is a field recording of a violent thunderstorm, complete with flashes of forked lightning and lashing rain. Its existing and something frightening sound surrounds the listener, dousing in on him as the full fury of the elements crash down. Rain – and Cleutt's obsession with rain – is the main driving force behind *My Own Thousand Shatterings*, which includes two deep listening styled drones influenced by his storm recording, intended to be played loud enough to bring the ceiling down, the two pieces begin to expand and fill the room until a strong sense of being unable to move takes over. Cleutt's reverberating drones are dramatic, powerful and at one with nature.

COC OSP

LABCOLPILATION #2

PANAROHO CD

German performance and sound artist CoeSparcose (aka COC OSP) uses metal, light and poetry to create his impressive and unsettling theatrical noise compositions. By digitally processing concrete tones, metallic sounds (made on his own "clang tools") and spoken word, COC uses primitive and technological means to create hellish soundscapes that tear the imagination like a white hot brand. Like Col at their peak, COC has the power to prise open magical doors of perception and let his audience peek through

into other worlds. The OSP part of his name stands for OptonicProjects which adds a visual element to his sound installations. Although the CD cover only hints at what these might be, this compilation of various works from 1998 to 2003 provides ample inspiration to set the cortex racing.

CULVER-COURTIS

CULVER-COURTIS

ROBOTIC LP

Originally released in 1997 by UK/European independent labels Matching Head, FDR and Capten, this meeting – "dedicated to distance and perception" – between UK Noise musician Culver (aka Lee Stokoe) and Reynolds' Alan Courte has now been thoughtfully reissued on clear vinyl by Ret Sound. Its four tracks of blinding electronic ambience and guitar have the listener inside a sound environment that is the equivalent of taking a tour around a haunted foundry. Chants clang, lashes grind and moan while somewhere in the distance a famine is continually stoked. Culver-Courtis's collaboration has retained its unsettling power to disturb and amaze.

DEAD MACHINES

HUMAN BRAIN WASTING SYNDROME

ECOSATIC PEACE LP

The bad brains behind Dead Machines bring to John Olson of Wolf Eyes and Trevor O'Rourke of Wooden Wand & The Vanishing Voice, two very individual voices that resound throughout this latest project even as they work in perfect, albeit disjointed, harmony. After a series of releases on Olson's American Tapes label, Dead Machine's LP debut for Ecostatic Peace is roughly housed between two pieces of corrupted card with colour xerxed artwork tacked on to them. This hands-on effect is also in the grooves of Human Brain Wasting Syndrome, two long tracks of subterranean electronic scary, which sounds like the radar beam of a nuclear submarine being broadcast from the depths of a Transylvanian forest. UFOs, giant bats, squeaking hogs and werewolves also move submissively through this mysterious work, which burrows ever deeper into the crevices of Olson's and O'Rourke's collective creative psyche to unearth forgotten nightmares.

ELECTROPHILIA

BLACK NOISE PRACTITIONER

SKULLAPOPCYPHIA TOWERIS 2XLP

Feedback genius Stephen Parino and Jutta Koether, two artists who live and work in New York City, unleash four sides of their combined improvised guitar grind 'n' noise on the world with a record that claims to be influenced by Lou Reed's Metal Machine Music experiments, Mewtwo, Albert Ayler and primal Stooges. Add to that the more extreme examples of New York's 80s No Wave scene, an early apocalyptic (or dream?) after seeing The Grateful Dead play three hours of feedback and a suggested visual attraction to Robert De Niro's singer Process Church, and Electrophilia suddenly start

making sense. Black Noise Practitioner is abstract rock music stripped down to the raw nerve endings. Although hardly revolutionary, at least it fulfils the duo's ambition of getting an impressive looking double album onto the streets. Helped along by (among others) Christopher Polk from Henry For Petrol and Gang Gang Dance/Angelblood, Nesse's Lizz Beugastas, Electrophilia's remorseless, sometimes stunning blur of Industrialized cacophony is a welcome addition to NYC's morphing underground rock scene.

MERZBOW

1833

EMOF LP

Japanese Noise maestro Merzbow is the latest contributor to German art/music label Ey/Of's ongoing project integrating an LP of music and an art object from an invited musician and artist. Presented in a generic gatefold sleeve in an edition of 100 copies, the Ey/Of catalogue belongs more to the art gallery than the record store and as a result they are somewhat expensive. But Merzbow's 1633 offering is well worth the investment, as he continues to mine a newly discovered list seen of digital noise textures. Some of these are more recognisable as they suddenly erupt out of his volcanic sound collage, the main one here being a rock 'n' roll drum kit that acts as the central focus for the record's B-side. Looking into a sample that creates the illusion of a tone arm playing the out-the-groove of a record, the imaginary stylus suddenly skids into an undercurrent of high pitched electronic squealing, low rumbling transmutes and Black Metal backward masking technique where demons sibilant, whisperings can be heard hissing in the boiling depths of the mix.

Making up the other half of the set, meanwhile, is artist Kendall Geers' felicitous slip called The Electronic Revolution. It's the perfect soft accompaniment to cushion the deadly impact of Merzbow's storm of broken glass, ruptured metal and shattered vinyl.

MOUTHUS

LOAM

ECOSATIC PEACE LP

Meuthus are Brooklyn based guitarists Brian Sullivan and drummer Nate Nelson, whose distorted psychadelic guitar trash and tragiolyne skin pounding is a post-No Wave baritone of the senses that echoes the primitive live recordings of Manz. Just exactly what is being uttered on "Mast Anubis" is hard to decipher through the smog of sonic sludge that surrounds it. But it is feelings, not words, that are important here. Mouthus can vocals as an extension of their broken music, a split to support the fragile riffs and tunes that sound like they're about to fall apart any second. "Yira" and "Sheep Oust" are Loam's ugliest highlights, where a glorious bout of electric guitar shredding, ornamented with vibrant pulses of VU decoded feedback, soars over a muted train can drum solo, before falling into a Wolf Eyes-style quadruple of sped-up electronics, bloodied

guitar drawing and stabby fingered B movie organ drone.

ORGANUM Z'EV

TOCSIN - 6 THRU +2

DIE STADT CD

A taste of what these two important sound artists could do when they got together was revealed on last year's *Tintiss Vu* for Touch. Here Orgaum and Z'EV meet again to lay down a set of tracks played on the studio's historic grand piano and stainless steel percussion. These were then taken home and individually worked on to produce two distinctively different pieces. They range from metallic deep space drones to punctuated piano soundings that soon get caught up in the whirling blurs of the die's multi-layered machine music. Although the majority of the mixes included are impressive, they are also cold and distant, and it isn't until the piano is revived that a feeling of human contact returns.

PSI

BLACK AMERICAN FLAG

ENDOZEAR CD

PSI are the comprising Jamie Fennelly on electronics, Chris Forsyth on guitar and drummer Fritz Welch, who also samples cymbals and shuffles objects around on the two tracks presented here. "Headline Into The Flames" is a carefully prepared sound construction that swerves from the handily acidic to blaring feedback onslaught in the blink of an eye, only to shut down into near silence. The longer, more involved "May Day" follows a similar approach, only now the silences are packed with more sonic dead from Fennelly and Welch, while Forsyth's guitar snarls in a corner like a half-starved junkyard dog. For their ability to come across sounding like a pure rock version of AMM, Black American Flag deserves saluting.

MAJA SK RATKIE & LASSE MARHAUG

MUSIC FOR FAKING

CAFCD

After their previous *Music For Shopping* and *Music For Loving* collaborations, Norwegian noise Impressionists Maja Sk Ratkje from Spunk and Lasse Marhaug of Jazkammer fame return with a third collection of incredibly strange sounds and fractured, chaotic sampling. *Music For Faking* is the equivalent of carelessly tossing a lit match into an open box of cheap Korean fireworks. It goes off with a bang and sends a series of screaming noise rockets into the air, which plummets back to earth showering sparks and flaming debris. "How much noise can we make?" (let's find out!) is one of the questions asked here, and they answer it with a Godzillasize blast of digital demolition that comes down hard and keeps pounding. Elsewhere what sounds like a William S Burroughs voice sample and bloploplop TV clips are incorporated into the mix of intricately looped beats and crushed instrumentation. Faking it has never sounded so real. □

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Left-leaving: Gang Of Four

RIP IT UP AND START AGAIN: POST-PIUNK 1978-1984

SIMON REYNOLDS

FASER & FASER Pbk £12.99

BY ROB YOUNG

"It's punk rock that seems the historical aberration." The heretical premise of this book – punk as blip, not bedrock – is Simon Reynolds's tool for getting to grips with the enormous range of music and marnaged, reprinted sounds that went on, often but not always under the radar, during post-punk's six-year window of opportunity before the MTV effect smashed into the music industry. Reynolds finds "post-punk" part of a longer continuum that stretches back, pre-punk, to art rock and Progressive music – music that strove to mean something more than its intrinsic entertainment value. What, then, could be more Prog than the chocolate guitar (£6000 from Harrods) fed to a TV audience by The Associates' Alan Rankine during *Top Of The Pops*?

As Reynolds admits, post-punk provided the formative musical epiphanies of his life, assuring him that music mattered. The narrative is aminged as a series of profiles of different artists, groups or "clusters" of hammed activities, often joined through shared geography or sociology. The first few chapters range over a Western landscape of post-industrial decay – London (PIL, Subway Sect), Manchester and the North of England (The Fall, Buzzcocks, Magazine), Ohio (Pins Ubu, Devo), and plunges into the slum city of late '70s downtown New York for an outline of the No Wave scene. There are plenty of memorable, piercing descriptive jabs throughout the telling of these tales –

James Chance And The Contordians are "hepped up on death-drive and artificial energy", their music "nudged with tics and jabs – a prickly, immodest sound, like a speed-freak scratching at halucinatory bugs under the skin".

He's very good on Gang Of Four, Wim, Human League and Talking Heads. He's great in digging up detail on the Bristolian boho-intellectual milieu of The Pop Group, and on theorising over their and counterparts The Slits' obsessions with mud, earth and a "rave idealisation of naked savagery". The writing noticeably comes up in the chapter on Scotti Poissi – one of Reynolds's entry points in the post-punk state of mind. The group (actually a half-dozen musicians surrounded by a large collective of hangers-on) who would conduct late-night political theory seminars/word domination strategy meetings, exemplified by photos of their poker Casper square, swish with pamphlets, records and Grammo textbooks – encapsulates all that he identifies as post-punkery. All fanatics, a meta-pop desire to use the song to interrogate its own content, postmodern "messiahs", and a readiness to deconstruct art by revealing the mechanisms of production and turning commodity hype tactics back on the industry. Scotti's ramshackle semi-detached operation comes out exceptionally intriguing in Reynolds's reading – and it's no surprise that one of his favourite post-punk groups used it as platform as a form of social and cultural journalism as much as a hit factory.

Reynolds is the Nihilistic Frye of music criticism – his most effective mode is the anatomy. Under his probing, artists and games lock tightly into networked grooves and channels, reaching outcomes and fulfilling destinies with a retrospective predetermined. It's a journalistic approach generally foisted by musicists and practitioners themselves, fond of being confined to a vision of events that appears inevitable only in hindsight. It's why he's taken so comfortably to the blog: the perfect outlet for the anal construction of lists, the naming of perishable magazines, the monitoring of up and downshifts in favour, and the monitoring of the zeitgeist's hamsters and mists.

Occasionally certain "blogging" traits have penetrated the book. Journalistic telescoping sometimes works against the radicalism and spannedness of the music under discussion. There's a certain glib way of chucking in a phrase like "studio-as-instrument" as a motif for the complex, contingent practice of producers like Eno, Martin Hannett, Steve Stapleton, et al, which conveniently whitewashes nuanced ways of working that should have been more deeply investigated. And while he commendably touches on moments when post-punk collided or intersected with movements even further underground such as the London Musicians' Collective, there's a tendency to sneer at music that doesn't attempt to engage with the strategies of popular music. His summary of Throbbing Gristle's achievements, for example, is that "their music, in a sense, was merely a delivery system for their ideas – a hangover from COUM's previous existence in the world of conceptual art." That "merely" is telling. Reynolds speaks embarrassed by forms like improvisation or performance art that don't emerge via the "pop" channels of records, "bands", press coverage, etc.

The book could have ended halfway through and remained a enlightening portrait of what's conventionally considered "post-punk". But after describing the depressing, evident demise of PIL (unfortunately, Reynolds doesn't get to speak to John Lydon), he embarks on an ambitious lony through post-punk's "second wave" in the early 80s, chasing down a number of parallel scenes to their (often piffling) conclusions. He turns up a vast amount of incidental but significant detail on the skay/med revied; synthpop; the slipway into New Romanticism via Gary Numan, John Foxx, Ultravox and Spandau Ballet; the jealously guarded London idyl-night of Steve Strange and Siene Bizzare's Stoos; the Irish faced "perfect pop" of Orange Juice and Postcard label; the sick name of Foeus, Neubaten, Psyche IV and Col. He valently attempts a rescue of Malcolm McLaren's engineered one-hit wonders Bow Wow Wow, identifying their polyrhythmic ditties as Situation's canon ones "crammed with ideas to the point of incoherence".

But this shout was still part of the envelope. "By 1985... it seemed like almost all of that energy had dissipated, with every trajectory from punk reaching an impasse or petering out" he notes, as independent music suddenly reversed from futurism to retrospection and "record collection rock". Grace Jones's "Slave To The Rhythm" – an artificially induced song that couldn't be performed live, whose lyrics pile on layer after layer of allusion (then in cool issues to MID terminology) – is a fitting piece to set down his pen. Buy this 550 page brick of a book, read it, then lob it through the window of your local music superstore. □



Dizzy Gillespie's jazz-bassador's briefcase

SATCHMO BLOWS UP THE WORLD: JAZZ AMBASSADORS PLAY THE COLD WAR

PENNY M VON ESENCHEN

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESS HBK \$29.95

BY HUA HSU

The exportation of American culture abroad is often seen as a process propelled by purely commercial motives. But from 1956 through the late 1970s, the United States government blanched the far corners of the world with jazz, not in the service of the dollar, but in order to win the hearts and minds of the world's wary committed. Playful, disciplined and free-spirited, jazz was (and is still) one of the nation's finest products – it made sense to people states, patriotic old sages like Duke Ellington, Dizzy Gillespie and Dele Bruback in Asia, the Middle East and Eastern Europe. So, evasive, furtively obedient and free than a liberal democracy could ever promise to be, jazz was also a product deeply ambivalent about touring the methods and means of its own production.

Penny Von Eschen's fine study of "jazz-bassadors" and the marooned hipsters who

loved them pursues this tension down to its queerest details. Bruback is told that he must be smuggled across the Brandenburg Gate in the trunk of a car, Gillespie and Ellington each gig mere miles away from armed insurrection; a fresh, exiled Martha Reeves and an old, suspicious Frantz Fanon stand at the margin of the picture, running along. The broader picture isn't quite as wild. As Von Eschen explains, jazz diplomacy began as part of the State Department's kitchen sink approach to the problem of culture. It was an unrefined solution, managed and pushed forward by a knowing sliver of officials, critics and businesses who "got" jazz. The image of jazz as democratic polyphony that they sold to the State Department was admirably nuanced; if a bit rosy, but it made for great hopes among both the musicians and the government officials.

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: Chris Rose delves into visual artist Luke Fowler's leftfield culture documentaries and rickety recordings



Left: Luke Fowler. Right: A still from his Xentos Jones documentary *The Way Out*

While the Beck's Futures prize may style itself as the alternative to the media circus that is the Turner competition, it has not been reticent in attempting to court controversy or provoke outrage. Such prizes might help a wider public get a handle on new artists, but this may be difficult in the case of one of this year's nominees, Luke Fowler.

Fowler makes films, plays electronics and tapes in the group Rude Pravo, and runs Shadazz, alternately described as a "multimedia platform for collaborative artworks" or, more prosaically, a record label. Subsequently, any attempts to pin down or define exactly who Luke Fowler is, or describe exactly what he does, are difficult. Yet it is this very resistance to definition that characterises much of his work. "If you think about all the girls you've gone out with in your life, what's the similarity between them?" he asks, by way of explanation.

Fowler's latest film, *The Way Out*, was made in collaboration with Kosten Koper, a former member of the Diskone collective. The film is a "portrait" of both Xentos Jones (aka Xentos 'Fray' Bentos), formerly of post-punk group The Homosexuals, and Fowler himself. "I'm interested in people dethroning the establishment and conventional ways of working," Fowler explains. "This could be RD Laing (the 'anti-psychiatrist' about whom he made the film *What You See Is Where You're At!*) or Xentos Jones. *The Way Out* is about Xentos's attempt to dethrone the music industry, examining how artists can often be suffocated by their own career. Xentos has been completely heuristic, following his own internal rhythm. I consider him to be one of the few true outsider artists."

The Way Out began when Fowler stumbled across The Homosexuals on a Recommended Records sampler. Koper then lent him a copy of *The Way Out*, an album made by Xentos using the pseudonym, L Vog. "It just blew me away," Fowler enthuses. "It was one of the most disparate records I'd ever heard, combining pastiches of jazz, improv, musique concrete and adrenalinfuelled punk all cut up with dadaist lyrics." The LP is set in a universe where atonal serialist music has become mainstream pop music. It was an attempt to create a record that would be

uncommercial even in that setting. "Xentos was involved in so many recordings but none were just 'side projects,'" Fowler expounds. "He used these invented characters as ciphers to explore unknown musical terrains. He had a genuine disgust for any concepts of 'networking' or 'careersm'. People like Jandek seem to me a triumph of anti-marketing, cashing in on the myth of the 'tormented artist'. This is as much a marketing strategy as pandering to the media. Xentos kicks against this – he has no interest in seeking acceptance from the outside world or using his art as cultural capital."

Fowler insists the film "is not just a straight documentary but a film about conflicts of representation and the struggle for creative independence". The dizzying collage of found footage, including some of Jones's own Super-8 films, interviews and surreal sketches, occasionally recalls a Monty Python-esque spoof documentary. Some moments are even reminiscent of the underground comedy unit Friesian Theatre. Playing with form, contradictory and fragmentary, it is in fact a reflection of Xentos's puzzling and difficult character and work. "It was amazing to see him playing his 'instruments' on last year's Feedback! Under From Noise tour around the UK. These instruments that reject any notion of control or order could be very brutal and aggressive, but also very beautiful."

Fowler's involvement with music is most notable in Shadazz, which he defines as "an outlet for people being creative in electronic music". The first Shadazz CD, titled *The Scottish Demo Collective*, took a selection of musicians unknown even in their homeland of Scotland and brought them together as part of a free CD and fanzine for an art show in Greece. The second, 2001's *The Invisible Insurrection Of A Million Minds*, was a deliberate attempt to confront the commercial market; but, as it sold so few copies, it was a "total failure". The third compilation, *Merlin Modules For Minimix*, took Scottish electronic music into the artworld, with the offer to make a free CD for the Dutch conceptual art magazine Casco Issues. The VHS *Evi Eye Is Source* was a collection of collaborative works subverting the function of the music video.

Shadazz recently issued *The Dust Is Flying*, the first single by Fowler's collaborative group Rude Pravo. Currently consisting of Fowler on electronics and tapes, Steve Jones on bass, Lucie Basanourou on vocals and Jamie Murray on cello, Rude Pravo sound like "a cross between The Honeymoon Killers and a medieval No Wave ensemble", according to Fowler. Featuring found sounds and a tiny drum machine with a swelling cello underpinning the French vocals, "The Dust Is Flying" is haunting and elegiac. The song's experimental elements play off against a strong emotional pull – a tension found throughout Fowler's work.

Fowler is currently working on a film about Cornelius Cardew and The Scratch Orchestra. Due to be finished in October, it also confronts issues of artistic integrity. "I'm interested in how the music establishment believed that when Cardew turned to tonal political music he had somehow betrayed the experimental school," he explains. "Yet in renouncing music for political motives he asks who we fundamentally make music for, critically questioning the function of the avant garde in society." Again, the film is not a straight documentary. It resists definition in the same way that film is about resisting definition. According to Fowler, Cardew's Scratch Orchestra "were trying to work outside a system, yet they eventually fractured due to internal squabbles and the perceived disunity between theory and practice". They became involved in Maoism and the notion of making music to serve the cause of socialism. "Of course this form of socialist realism explicitly suppresses the individual's artistic freedoms. But [pianist] John Tilbury's counter-argument is that 'artistic freedom' under capitalism is just as oppressive, but the form of oppression is covert. To become a successful artist you have to serve the art market, the gallery system and its dealers. It's a different, yet more insidious control system. Are you really more free this way than with art made under an honest, clear political cause?"

Despite his Beck's Futures nomination, which means Fowler is now "working for the beer man", as he puts it, the question is one which his work will continue to ask. □ *Beck's Futures* runs until 15 May at London's ICA. Rude Pravo and other Shadazz editions are available through www.shadazz.co.uk

Left to right: *Lies in Kill Yr Idols*; still from *Legong, Dance Of The Virgins*; Robert Moog with his theremin**KILL YR IDOLS**

SCOTT CRARY 2004, 70 MIN

BY ANNE HILDE NESET

Scott Crary's documentary on the No Wave scene has a promising start. Martin Rev remembers seeing New York Dolls and reading Lester Bangs for the first time; Lydia Lunch and Jim Sclavunos recall the creative desperation that ignited Teenage Jesus And The Jerks; Glenn Branca grows about the rock music that shook off the blues legacy; Amy Lindsay sounds off about dismantling the building blocks of music while Lee Ranaldo and Thurston Moore rip about reductivist techniques. The 1980s in New York was a time of experimentation and vision, and music created out of frenzied need for territories.

The best of the film comes early on, with the raw footage of Sonic Youth, Teenage Jesus and the Swans, plus clips from Lunch and Jim "Postal" Thurrott in Richard Kern's notorious transgressive film *Fingered* and *The Right Side Of My Brain*. And then it all goes downhill fast. The editing is hasty and restless, and the decision to divide the story into "chapters", with titles like "Legacy", "Nostalgia", "The Scene", "Memory As Commerce", not only ruins the continuity, it adds an annoying self-obsessed and student-like quality.

But the real problem starts when Crary attempts some sort of thesis about the bond between No Wave and current New York groups. Yeah Yeah Yeahs' Karen O comes across as terminally unfocused, saying nothing worthwhile about her own or anybody else's music. Mumbling about experimenting on stage, Lunch hide their lack of determination quite well, until one fatigued bruit, "I don't know what we're about, we'd like you to help us figure that out". A self-promoting ensemble of vacuous posers called ARE Weapons show, "We've been losing ass under this name for three years now", going on to say how absurdly "cool" it is to walk the streets of New York while displaying more interest in the rewards — groups, parties — than the actual business of playing music.

It's a despairing state of affairs, and when Lunch launches a scathing attack on current, formulaic and unadventurous rock groups, made

up of people getting into music for all the wrong reasons, you can't help but sigh in relief that somebody is finally speaking up. At which point the film simply fades away without making any point in any direction. An opportunity missed.

LEGONG, DANCE OF THE VIRGINSHENRI DE LA FAULAGE 1935, 85 MIN
MILESTONE DVD

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

In 1933, the Marquis Henri de la Falaise de la Couture, financed by his wife (Hollywood actress Constance Bennett), ventured to Bali with a Paramount Studios crew to film, in weirdly beautiful two-shot techniques, a tale of unrequited love and self-immolating sorcery amid authentically depicted village life. *Legong, Dance Of The Virgins*.

The results were of a piece with films enhanced by romanticized ethnography shot in the same era — Robert Flaherty's *Nanook Of The North* or FW Murnau's *Taxi*. In its day, *Legong* fired well with audiences craving exotic, there had already begun a vogue for imagery and clichéphrases derived from the Pacific island, which was then newly "discovered" by moneyed travellers. Later, however, the film all but vanished, dismembered by various causes. Fortunately, when excusing offending footage, different countries' moral agendas didn't overlap; the Americans were incensed by Balinese nudity, the British were against depictions of coitalights. In the 90s, UCLA's Film and Television Archive managed to reconstruct De La Falaise's original edit from prints found on both sides of the Atlantic.

To herald the restored *Legong*, a new score was composed during 1998-99 by Richard Mennet of San Francisco's Club Foot Orchestra and the guest musical director of Gamelan Sekar Jaya, I Made Subandi. This soundtrack, which was performed live during a select few screenings in New York and the Bay Area, has been added to the *Legong* DVD as an optional audio track. Given that the original Hollywood orchestration represented little more than an orientalist pastiche typical of its day, the

Mennet-Subandi score is all the more welcome.

On the surface of the score, the Club Foot strings and woodwinds provide accessible melodies and emotional content familiar to Western moviegoers, while the metallophones and bamboo percussions of Gamelan Sekar Jaya couch the depictions of village life and ceremony in sonic versatilities. The two ensembles mesh beautifully, without noticeable dissonance between either group's tunings or rhythms. The composers descend, early on, to divide the scenes between their respective groups, with the Western players holding plot exposition and romantic themes, and the gamelan underscoring the numerous trials central to *Legong*'s plot.

The finished score doesn't reflect a tidy division of labour. Rather, one hears culturally dissimilar groups integrating. Gamelan Sekar Jaya functions as a rhythmic section behind the Club Foot's melodies, and often it's the Balinese ensemble that targets the core emotions of a given scene. The DVD's stereo mix places the strings and woodwinds back in a naturally reverberant soundstage, as though recreating "electrical" recordings made at the time of *Legong*'s filming. The gamelan's brass and bamboo percussions are placed in the near field, their dense harmonics shimmering in perfect complement to the sunlit lagoons onscreen.

MOOGHANS FELLESTAD 2004, 70 MIN
PLEXIFILM DVD

BY KEN HOLLOWAY

If a missile could ever leave a crater, it would probably have the depth and dimensions of this meandering patchy documentary, helter-skelter in search of a subject. Previously responsible for 2002's *Frontier Life*, a lecture on the electronic music scene in Tijuana, musician and director Fellestad appears to have followed Bob Moog around the world, capturing him on street corners in Tokyo or huddled down in conversation with an interesting range of former colleagues, old practitioners or more recent neophytes, and yet the resulting portrait firmly remains an outsider's one. You can see the problem right there in the

title: does Moog refer to Bob Moog the man or his Moog synthesizer invention? Hard to say; there's little biographical material to offer depth to the former and not enough coherent analysis or technical detail to support the latter. To confuse matters further, Fellestad makes use of old Moog company logo for his film's title sequence, but this is next to nothing in the film to reflect the complex corporate history it represents.

And yet there is evidently a story worth telling here; it's just unfortunate that at some stage in the project Fellestad seems to have assumed his audience already knew it. His chummy pursuit of Moog has as its basic assumption that because Bob Big is responsible for such a fascinating modern phenomenon as the modular synthesizer, he must therefore be fascinating in and of himself. Big mistake.

Bob Moog was and is a sublime applied engineer with a pretentious sensitivity for what's going on inside the board. "I can feel what's going on in a piece of equipment," he states, expressing an intuitive response to also claims to detect in the approach of other musicians, such as Rick Wakeman and Keith Emerson. In fact, this does not make him a musician, as evidenced by Moog's somewhat slushy rendition of *Old Man River* on a Theremin towards the film's conclusion.

He is, however, a man who was engaged with a particular element in music's history; and the few incidents when stuff starts happening on the screen usually occur while Moog is reminiscing with those involved in the early days of the synthesizer's presentation.

Collaborator Walter Seliel, looking dapper in a black turtleneck sweater, talks candidly about the difficulties of finding a market for the device, let alone customers. This was one that changed from moment to moment during the 1960s. Moog admits, from angles to TV and radio commercials, to a compulsion of library music to produce and arrange for the big record labels.

Moog player Gresham Kingsley talks with consummate grace of being introduced to an early model by Eric Sela, an energetic pioneer of the commercial use of electronic sound. Composer Herb Deutsch, sitting in a room filled



Model to the eye (left to right): Cecilia Pichot, Alejandra (left) Fernández, Anna, and Anna Fernández, Anna, Fernández, Anna en Los Argentinos (2007).

with operatic lines of grand piano, recalls how back in the day he had wondered whether the early model synthesizers required a keyboard at all. If some of the film's truly dice performances are anything to go by, especially from the likes of Stenolab, Money Mark, Mix Master Mike and Bernie Worrell, he may well have had a point.

NON-RESIDENT
TOM HOMINIBLUE

PASTICHE FILMS (OHM) DVD + CD

See also: [Structural engineering](#)

scene (with the emphasis on Norway), film maker Tim Houben tracks down a dozen sound artists in a bid to discover what the term means to them. Armed with a camera and a low budget, he confronts his chosen subjects and fires the same question at them, "What is noise music?" The answers reveal much about the evolution of the genre and those who are involved in its development. The talking heads include Tere H. Bae, David Cother, Masaaki Akita aka Morbow, Luisa Marhug, Toshimaru Nakamura, ARKA, Aegean Flax, Mya SK Ratkey, Kjetil Runar Jønnes, Francesco López, Helge Sten and Ottomo Yoshihiko at of whom speak eloquently and passionately about noise and what it means to them. For Bee, noise is just a small fragment of a scene (with the emphasis on Norway), film maker Tim Houben tracks down a dozen sound artists in a bid to discover what the term means to them. Armed with a camera and a low budget, he confronts his chosen subjects and fires the same question at them, "What is noise music?" The answers reveal much about the evolution of the genre and those who are involved in its development. The talking heads include Tere H. Bae, David Cother, Masaaki Akita aka Morbow, Luisa Marhug, Toshimaru Nakamura, ARKA, Aegean Flax, Mya SK Ratkey, Kjetil Runar Jønnes, Francesco López, Helge Sten and Ottomo Yoshihiko at of whom speak eloquently and passionately about noise and what it means to them.

larger sound collage, to which he adds electronic sound, native silverware and spoons noise over a cymbal in a hands on approach that slightly steps away from the accepted concentrated state of the illuminated screen of an Apple Powerbook. Mozart Alita, however, seems inextricably linked to his computer. After tapping up Metroweb's managerial period inside the 50 CD Metroweb on the Executive label, Alita now feels as though he has been reborn: "I think I had just started doing noise" he enthuses through yowl subtitles. "I'm making music because I can't sing like birds and other animals," he continues. "The human world which is abusing beautiful animals should be ruled." The short brutal bursts of Metroweb's performance (solo and with Norwegian noise duo Jazkam) suggest that he has enough power to inflict animal justice on the human race if the mood took him. "I've been thinking about the Jonestown massacre," he says.

Throughout the book, the readings are well-quoted by diverse composers and musicians – such as Luiz Buarque, Egberto Gismonti and John

Cage; industrial and post-punk rockers Rammstein; 'No' Ross, Electrosonic, Neubauers and Sonics; Youth; Thurston Moore — whose work within noise is considered by Hovikost (and many of his interviewees) as integral to its creative archaeology. Accompanying the DVD is an excellent CD featuring sound explosions from a gathering of Norwegian artists and groups (Tor H Bæ, Jazkammer, Fe-Mål, Norwegian Noise Orchestra, etc) which, perhaps uncharitably, manages to tell us *all* about the state of noise in Norway than the actual film.

LOS ANGELES

LOS ANGELES MUSEUM OF
CONTEMPORARY ART
USA

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

In an exhibition like this, by definition, a transporting viewer through several decades of cross-fertilization between music and the plastic arts, sequencing is critical. *Visual Music* makes it greatest impressions sporadically, rather than sustaining what is at intervals a galvanizing impact; often as not, the eyes to the ear, the sequence of presentation between galleries.

confronted with a film theatre screening short films, some with soundtracks. The repeating programme offers the best known work of legendary animators such as Winsor McCay, Oscar Fischinger and, from a later period, the American occultist and renegade folklorist Harry Smith. With his extremely large-scale projections, the linear abstract forms derived from nature as drawn by Eggersen seem more closely related to the famous atheism of Smith's application of bulk-dye techniques to film stock. Both film makers' involvement with music seems obvious: Smith's *Abstractor* possesses both the volatile energy of the jazz musicians he socialised with and the hallucinatory inclinations of the Native American shamans whose music he documented. Eggersen, most often identified as a dadaist, sought to define a language of counterpoint with the evolving shapes of his *Symphony Diagonal Paintings* by Eggersen and his fellow animator (an occasional collaborator) Hans Richter on display in subsequent rooms further underlining the desire of these iconoclastic talents to infuse their visual

work with the human energy and system of music.

Fischinger's *Rado-Dynamics* is another component of the screening room's programme; his "experiment in colour-rhythm", as the title card states, studies Egon's formal concerns and the hyper-dive of Smith's handmade films. It also introduces a key estimator of geometrical style in animated film, one whose work and influence crop up repeatedly through the balance of *Visual Music*. It is with the screening of *Colour Box*, a British 1935 advertising short by the New Zealand-born sculptor and film maker Len Lye, that *Visual Music's* first significant omission is detected. Lye's contemporary, the Canadian animator Norman McLaren, explored the possibilities afforded by painting directly on film stock, specifically that portion of the film reserved for optically read soundtracks. Fischinger's film-strip paintings evoke the look of McLaren's work, but were just that: paintings. The other animators, however, hitherto, had music dubbed into their audio tracks. McLaren's abstract works (such as *Behave!* *Oil Can* and *Blistery Blank*) actually generated sound in concert with their visual variants of geometry and pulsing rhythm. Introspective of pictures and vibration was intrinsic to McLaren's animations; let his substancial body of work goes unmentioned in the MCCA exhibition.

The electric experience of the films first encountered makes for an urgently transitory visit to the galleries that follow, containing an extensive survey of abstract paintings from the early years of the 20th century. Wassily Kandinsky stands out in this collection, which includes key entries from Paul Klee and Georges Braque. Despite the audiotape MP3 players posted throughout the painting galleries, it's difficult to sense the revolutionary import freighted by these works in their day. They are simply overexposed, in their aesthetic environment, by the films that precede them. Indeed, the small-format paintings of amateur Egging (1910's *Ponore*) and Hans Richter's *Orchestration Of Colour And Form* (1920) are both, from 1923, assumed de facto status as loci of attention in the room, being overwhelmed by cinematic virtue.

code. His other investigation of color organs and related mechanical/visual devices that employ discs, lenses, prisms and keyboards in varying

attempts to insinuate colour information along a timescale. Whilst individual rooms have been accorded one-off machines like Daniel Widmer-Bennet's *Revolving Piano Cophaguen* (1922-23) and the *proto-lava lamp* hybrid concoctions of Thomas Wilfred, the latter, a Danish artist who emigrated to the US, explored the idea of "silent visual music", eschewing altogether the notion of images tethered to recorded sound. Wilfred's was a pure attempt to promote synaesthesia in the viewer, via the use of his invention, the *Clavilux* (which, like the lava lamp, came in sizes variously appropriate to home or corporate installations). Unfortunately, the sounds of nearby installations impinge on the quiet workings of the *Clavilux* in a way that doubtless would have ruffled Wilfred's feathers.

energy of invention seems to taper off into soft, faint ambiences — even the not-to-West Coast *Lightshow* companies of the late '60s lack the genitive joie provided in that enterprise by Manhattan's Exploding Plastic Inevitable, and the simple fact that the *Lightshow* was invented at San Francisco's Tape Center through the collaboration of composer Morton Subotnick and visual artist Lee Ranaldo (see "The Wav 194") is ignored outright — while the choice of contemporary artists/musicians seems increasingly local to Southern California. To its credit, though, *Visual Music* occasioned a string of intriguing cosulatory performances. Twirling *Gretsch* alums Chico Carter and Gospie Funk Tuff were seated at the neighbouring Calarts Reddot Theatre, as were other evenings, promising sets by Tom Reardon, Raster Noton and David Rosenboom, the latter offering his theatrical, multimedia *Bel Sinfonia*. Visual Music's successes and shortcomings

may be epitomised by the tension between the transcendence offered by John Whitney's triple-screen animation *Side Phase Out* (1965) and the limp, facile disco-ball programming of Nike Sawa's *Antennah* (The Curve) from 2003, each accented their own spaces. Leaving the exhibition area and moving upstairs to MCA's bookstore, you heard Young Marble Giants singing "Final Day" on the house systems, through the store window, light glinted off the glass of neighbouring financial towers. Synthesis was achieved, at too easily, in this moment. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by JG Thirlwell



ALICE COOPER MUSCLE OF LOVE

WARNER BROS 1974

ALBUM CONCEPT AND DESIGN BY

PACIFIC EYES & EAR

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SAINTGWAGO DESANGES

Muscle Of Love wasn't Alice Cooper's finest hour musically, or even necessarily his finest sleeve, but as a piece of packaging it consists of a bizarre confluence of elements. Cooper had released immersive, Alabama classics previously

like School's Out (which had legs that folded out to turn it into a school desk, with the record wrapped in an actual pair of pincers), Billion Dollar Babies (a 'wallet' containing a million dollar bill) and Killer (where Alice is gloriously hung by the neck in the gatefold), which all seemed to marry the whimsical, surreal and the violent.

Muscle comes in a corrugated cardboard box with printing on the outside in pink, in an apparent statement of firm following function. It

took me a while to realise that the discolouration on the bottom half of the box was printed on to it. Evidently this meant that the one 'muscle' within was flesh, dripping and had soaked through the cardstock.

This was not ornamental or decorative for contemplative sleeves — this was unapologetically packaging! "Friggle", warned the box, "Do not bend. Avoid Excessive Heat". A die-cut lip on the back flipped up to reveal its contents.

When I first saw it as a kid I wasn't quite sure

whether it was the real cover, or some kind of advance or promo package that the record was held in until the real cover came along. They didn't so much carry this allusion along into the box though. A credits page with nautical imagery includes folding instructions to transform it into a book cover. And on a full colour sleeve sleeve the band are thrashed at the "Institute of Nude Wrestling" by a blonde gorilla. *Rock's* new album, Love, is released next month on Birdman

Go To:



Creative Commons (creativecommons.org) is a progressive think-tank which steadfastly believes that the music industry should spend more time on legal innovation than technological ingenuity. Its manifesto, found online, proposes "flexible music licensing" where artists decide what kind of sampling or remixing rights they'll grant. So far, The Beach Boys, Chuck D and David Byrne among others have grabbed Creative Commons licenses for certain songs, with Creative Commons itself offering some of the results at their CC Music site (creativecommons.org). **United Remakers Guild** (www.ugja.com) has no charter as traditional guilds do, but offers free membership to regard and rate negotiations of everything from Bryan Ferry to reggaeton to Justin Timberlake.

Granting similar services, **Sectionz** (www.sectionz.com) welcomes all "bedroom composers" to "learn, review, share, collaborate, and most importantly, be heard". Though more limited to techno, the participants there offer up an impressive sonic range with notables including Epitrix's Prodigy remix and Fuglas assimilating Nine Inch Nails, Johnny Cash and his own singing.

Not to be outdone, some software companies are joining in on the fun. In a crafty promotional move, **Miniman** (www.miniman.com) not only provides remixer software, but also space on their site for users to show off their handiwork at **Miniman Radio** (www.miniman.com/radio/) with striking results. In an interesting twist, **PromoRoom** (www.promoroom.dpages.com) lets record labels themselves feature new tunes and get feedback from DJs and fans to figure out if they'll want to put out a song or not.

If just remaking sounds from dance records sounds too vanilla for you, **Video Game Music Archives** (www.vgmusic.com) offers up retro musical snatches from your favourite paediatric sports: Super Mario Brothers, Zeldas, Tetris and Pokemon all get the treatment there. **Video Game Music Archives**'s claim is that they want "well done music", which doesn't just include "adding a drum beat, changing an instrument, and stepping on a lame tone". Surely there's some sage advice that many would-be IDM arias would do well to take to heart.

JASON GROSS

On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh





Opposite page (clockwise from top): Matmos, Sint's Dexx Peja, Dearhoof. Above: The Melvins

ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES CAMBER SANDS UK

BY DEREK WALMSLEY

All Tomorrow's Parties is a festival with a capacity for magic, set in the most basal surroundings. Held at the incongruous setting of a coastal banal holiday camp, for six years it has pursued a nobby selection policy – a curator is given free rein to choose 40-50 performers for the weekend and select what whatever indie films and bootleg videos they'd like piped into festivalegoers' chalets. Putting faith in an opined mind but big name curators create an event larger than you might expect for a predominantly indie-fest – no matter what selects the line-up, every year you turn up and find several hundred music fans drinking beer, kicking footballs and waiting patiently for the music to start. After a highly successful fifth anniversary last year, with acts ranging from gaygore Scandalmongers to The Grids and Starbar to East London teenager Orlaith Rascal, this year ATP has secured their biggest coup yet, luring legendary Louisville outfit and post-rock founders Sint out of retirement to play and curate the festival.

Yet the usual ATP quality is spread a little thinly this weekend. The line-up is two thirds the size of previous years, making remaining performances even more packed, with as many festivalegoers running for the solace of the pub and its notoriously diverse DJ sets. Some acts seem more suited to a stately local back bar than a cutting edge music festival, as they are oppositely conservative musically. Second on the bill on the

opening night, Sean Gannon and The Five Finger Discount's undiluted, old-time Country should have been there as a mid-attention novelty.

Other artists seem too young or unpractised to merit the relatively large stage of ATP, such as Red Nails (clearly still in the embryonic stages of refining their songcraft) or Mighty Flashlight,

(whose musicians receive cues from singer Mike Fellows for the whole duration of the gig).

Ironically, Sint themselves sound fresher than anyone else this weekend. Their 1991 album Spazteland, not a dynamic record as much as a dramatic or cinematic one, virtually defined the start of post-rock. It is a powerful narrative of loss and introspection moulded from angular, almost jazz music, with Brian MacMahon's lyrical narration evoking an out of body detachment.

At ATP to an audience of well over 1000 people, the five individuals who figured in Sint's short lifespan play off of Spazteland, most of their debut *Twecz* and both tracks of the unified EP recorded between the two. The expectant silence of the crowd is broken as the guitar introduction of "Broadcrumb Trail" – a succinct motif as angular and enigmatic as "Lucy in the Sky With Diamonds" – receives a generates cheer. Played slowly and deliberately, even the jagged, youthful material of *Twecz* unfolds to reveal a fractured softness. Sint's music turns out to be not so much tortured and insular as transcendental, even with a hint of redemption. In the light of the performance, many critics taking a similarly lateral approach to structuring rock music – ATP performers Mogwai and Polar Guide Cars among them – struggle to bring

anything truly new to the table.

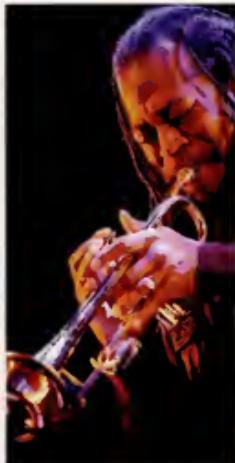
The Melvins – zoned briefly at the end by a stage-driving, strategically undressed David Yow of The Jesus Lizard – are another veteran act who sound strikingly contemporary. Their sludgy rock is ardent and thrillingly intimidating, their pummelling cover of The Beatles' "I Wanna Hold Your Hand" awkward and smodchend as a bodybuilder chatting up a schoolgirl. The rhythm section, especially Kevin Rzepmann's judicious bass work, prowls around the music rather than simply pushing it forward, achieving territory intensity without the slightest echo of a reliable rock pulse.

Matmos, one of only two electronic acts this weekend, provide the festival's most visually stimulating spectacle. As Louisville born Oren Dorei hums down behind a laptop and MC Schmidt samples bubbles blown into a bowl of water projected in close up on a pink screen behind them, the wet sizzle and dripping liquid appear hilariously erotic. Matmos make anguish electronic music, valuing the wholeness of sound and not fragments thereof, flattening the beats to the point of auditory and teasing wince-making sounds of a caged knuckle into a rock pop.

When Dearhoof aren't exploring intricate Prog passages, they create an asymmetric, impulsive George pop noise that tempts you somehow to shake an ass to it. Since their last ATP performance, they have become more exhortive, more absurd and they're off the more singular for it. Mogwai's post-rock has entered a calm stasis in the last few years. Exchanging angry guitars for piano as soft and sad as raindrops, it's now

used as a soundtrack for Channel 4 television trailers. Their performance today sees no change in their slow-building songcraft, but taken on its own melodic terms it is pleasantly reflective. Ben Heller and a backwards duo who intertwine vocals like a pair of Jeff Buckley's singing hillbilly double bass, bowed drums, open strings, even massaging the wood grain of the instrument to approximate the squeaking, brum-scaping accompaniment of early blues recordings. Although White Magic's Mira Biroth has earned comparisons with Nico for her vivid vocals and taut piano accompaniment, a gentler Glemmons Galas might be a closer approximation – her intimate song stories demonstrate a risk-taking and personal disclosure absent from the more conformist, self-satisfied alt Country acts who perform this weekend.

Sint's All Tomorrow's Parties proved another worthwhile weekend, if not quite as unmissable as previous years. All acts had admirable independent credentials, although by focusing predominantly on guitar based American outfit it lacked the usual sense of constituting a genuine alternative to other festivales, something that ATP usually effortlessly provides. Even Starmaster, a moderately amusing 'group versus fans' staring competition accompanied by WWF style wrestling bouts that headlined one of the main stages, was a good deal less interactive and interesting than the passionate alternative rock karaoke in the bar next door, and towards the end of the festival, an impromptu polo and pands protest against Starmaster erupted in the prison camp-like environs of the chalet area. □



Clockwise from top left: Ahmed Abdul Rehman at TUMfest; The Dhad G at What Is Metro?; paying homage to Ustad Vilayat Khan in London

USTAD VILAYAT KHAN LONDON ROYAL FESTIVAL HALL UK

BY JULIAN CONWAY

Ustad Vilayat Khan (1928-2004) was a towering figure in Indian classical music, a star virtuoso who invariably translated his extraordinary technical command into immediately affecting emotional values. The tribute concert brought together musicians able to capture and convey the essentials of the spirit that animated his music. A short documentary on Vilayat Khan prefaced the first set of an evening that stretched beyond six hours.

Shaukat Husain Khan performed two compositions by his father, appearing for the first time at a concert dedicated specifically to his

memory. His sister voicings are sweet-toned yet cut through with flashes of quicker agility and improvisational glee. The twinned tables of Sharafat Deshpande and, more prominently, Arunangshu Chaudhury were brilliantly coordinated with the course and momentum of Shaukat Khan's solos, as each unfurled towards its culminating, heartmaking moment of resolution.

A concluding love song, rendered with a tender singing voice that matched his instrumental style, drew collective gasps and sighs of appreciation from the knowledgeable and receptive audience.

In the second set, tribute was paid by the magisterial pairing of Shivkumar Sharma's santoor (hammered dulcimer) and Hariprasad

Chaurasia's bansuri (bamboo flute), accompanied superbly on tabla by Shaista Ahmed Khan. Innovative and hugely influential in their adaptation of folk instruments to music that observes and extends existing classical standards, the duo's sound conveys pastoral charm with highly sophisticated execution. Technical problems with acoustic projection and the tuning requirements of the santoor slackened the evening's pace, but Shivkumar Sharma's mangled ghatbandi and Hariprasad Chaurasia's teasing bamboo bird calls were, in a real sense, enchanting. In a small turn, they were invited at the end of their set to draw the raffle tickets.

It was getting late when the magnificent Hindustani Khajol singer Kishor Amorikar took

the stage, and during the hour-long unfolding of "Raga Regeswar" the audience thrived noisily, but that reflected transport logistics rather than the quality of her music, which was sublime. Balkumari Krishnan supplied tabla punctuations, Nandini Bedekar interjected strong and distinctive vocal support. Milind Rakhe's violin and Sugan Suhas's harmonium blended with tambura to project a radiant droneing cloud of sound through which the great vocalists' singing flowed and rippled with such ease, it seemed that she was simply breathing through music. A spellbinding performance that made the evening's occasional technical problems negligible. Overall this was one of those rare concert experiences that gave steadily richer and more affecting in memory. □

WHAT IS MUSIC 2005

MELBOURNE VARIOUS VENUES

AUSTRALIA

BY JOHN DALE

Australia's annual *What Is Music* festival reached its tenth anniversary in 2005. Cuntrax One, Ambarch and Robbie Avenam have built the festival from a series of low-key gigs in Sydney to a three-city behemoth, also covering Brisbane and Melbourne. They've also deftly negotiated one of the major problems facing any experimental music programme: balancing diverse acts with wildcard risks. This year's festival was structured differently to previous efforts – alongside the intimate club gigs that are *What Is Music's* staples, Ambarch and Avenam co-organised two nights, named the *Orpheus*, at Melbourne's Forum Theatre, featuring more than 30 performances on three stages in eight hours.

The first night was set in Melbourne's Herit Hall. A quartet of Anthony Guerri and Arie Gultenoglu on prepared guitars, Tashivine Koke on trombone and Takekumi Naoshima on electronics opened the festival. Their set was elegant, with Koke like the撤销, abstracting his trombone far from its traditional lexicon. Although their music shared certain approaches with both Berlin reductivism and the early school, the quartet's playing wasn't dogmatic – they simply and very quietly sought the most apposite sounds from their instruments.

Anthony Paterson's *Twink Ensemble* was unashamedly busy and giddy. Some inspired interplay flashed through at times – mostly from the real-time processing of Robin Fox. But the top-down hierarchy of composer/conductor

vealed an dictatorial and the performance never gelled. A similar problem beset Australian artist Philip Samartzis' *Absence And Presence* composition. While the freedom written into the score allowed for some strong improvisation from guitarist Dave Brown and percussionist Andrew Iliffe, too much of the performance was a perfunctory mess of dead techniques, cello scribbles and fatuous electronics. *Absence And Presence* fell flat.

From here the festival gave rise to the overseas contingent. The initial visceral thrill of hearing Pan Sonic's stentorian electronics Roaring the room, bursts of white noise scarring huge edifices of primal rhythm, eventually gave way to a breson structure – insert beat, efface with sputtering distortion, repeat process. Pan Sonic's Mika Vaino did offer one of the festival's most enduring moments, invading the stage and wrestling with members of Chicks On Speed during the latter group's punk-eclectic number "Turn Of The Century". The check's show is usually pure pleasure, but the the looked as though they were going through the motions, until the shuffle tech of "Festive Rules" shocked them into overdrive.

The first half hour of *The Residents'* 33rd Anniversary Retrospective was surprisingly strong, running through selections from early in their career like "Smelly Tongues" and "Amber". But as they towed through their history, the quality of their output nosedived, and the few songs that offered glimpses of *The Residents'* popular way with pop music were neutered by a hamfisted, infusing performance, evocating anything, anything from their material.

Performance of a different kind was central to Sunn O))), intense volume, monolithic riffs and

body rattling low-register vibrations were all present, but the Sunn O))) spectacle bordered on high camp, a boys with their toys' commune that revelled in smoke-machine excess, you never sure if the cod-epiphany poses and robes are supposed to be ludicrous. They benign, blissed-out causers. Growing opened both *Orpheus* nights to sparse audiences, but the duo acquitted themselves well, filling the main room with incendiary dithers and meandering meanders.

New York's Black Dice burned the delicacy and dynamics of albums like *Beaches And Canyons*, building go-nowhere edifices of electronics, clunky guitar and vocal chants that ended their own reveal a little too intense. Gang Gang Dance were puzzlingly bad with a flaccid synth sound – imagine a limp high school group trying to play The Pop Group.

Wednesday night at the Corner Hotel saw Kevin Drumm perched above his electronics with a quizzical look on his face, nimble as he unleashed massive blots of granulated sound, a thunderstorm stuck in a bungalow. The highlight of Drumm's visit to Melbourne, however, was a totally ridiculous DJ set of Metal classics and obscenities at the afternoon festival club.

Stefan Nevinil, aka Purice, elevated the one-man band to new status, shifting from melancholy in mutes to sprawling tape-noise larges, and one classic song that was a self-acknowledged tribute to the Clean. Leaplogging in his chair between a mezzanine guitar, tape machines, a small Cess, and a distorted drum kit, peeling out blunted chords while his feet pounded away at bass and snare, Nevinil's three sets were among the festival's highlights.

Si Redford Bishop was an understated

presence, though his fluid guitar playing sent off

funous sprays of notes as he worked through Middle Eastern modes, a Djembe Rhythmt tribute and complex improvisations. He turned to the Sun City Girls' back catalogue several times, resurrecting "Jooh Of The Myths" classics "The Vinger Strike" and "Eustonia Of Abyssinia". But his most bizarre and hilarious move was a one-off rascous rendition of Charlie Cocher's "Horse Cock Peeper".

Australia's Hi-God People were startlingly good. Expanding their ranks to 15 members, all costumed in wild outfit – cardigan box suits with mimos, one member covered head to toe in balloons – they brought a comical air to the festival's second stage. A front row of improvising musicians cluttered away on pedalier, percussion, strident sitar and blown woodwinds, setting a bed of low-level hission sound for strange, otherwise, slow-motion theatre. Later in the same room, Western P-We's OOOH essayed a set of shape-shifting, spindly pop songs, with shag-lace guitar exchange spilling over limber bass and drums. But it was The Dead C who crowned the festival, with two overwhelming performances of free rock. Wednesday's set at the Corner Hotel was expansive, the top hitting such vertiginous peaks that one's sense of time was completely stretched and twisted. Bruce Russell's and Michael Morley's tangled guitar interplay sliced through the air in the room, with Russell hovering his instruments with screwdrivers and other implements. On Saturday night, they cut to the chase, bludgeon heavy levels of damage out of their arms before slimming into a three-minute punk song, where bursts of feedback bled around Robbie Yeats' jackhammer rhythms. □

TUMFEST

HELSINKI VARIOUS VENUES

FINLAND

BY BRIAN MCINTOSH

Bernd Bröckl said the Fimms had the unique capacity to be silent in two languages, their own and that of the old colonists. Swedish still has its place on bilingual street signs and in the persistence here and there of Helsinki's other name, Helsingör, like an old ad. Bröckl's point doesn't entirely square with the ubiquity of mobile phones – more here, in Nokia's heartland, than anywhere on the planet except Korea – or with the vividly polyglot, laudacious music on show at the inaugural TUMFest.

Petri Haussala's beautifully curated and designed label has yet to make much impact outside Finland, but it will. The line-up over two cold but well attended nights was a mixture of locals, Danes and Americans. If Finnish music has been colonised – by jazz, Latin American dance, by the brooding miasms of Wagner and Bruckner that come down through the 20th century via Siberia – it has acquired a strong independent identity. The propulsive tone is dark, slow and with a deep, troubling pulse that recalls the country's bizarre fascination with tangos.

The signature expression of it in recent years was the late Edward Vesala's *Sound & Fury*, and the first night of TUMFest closed with a riotously eclectic set by a new ensemble led by Vesala's widow Iiro Heino and virtuoso bassist Ulf

Krötköös. Heino's piano playing and keyboard abstractions – no harp for the moment – is minimalist, mostly abstract and very rarely foregrounded and yet one suspects she's the driving force, den mother to a ten strong personnel that doubles up bass and drums and adds Johanna Länsinen's pure voice to a powerful phalanx of horns. Heino and the rhythm section mostly create contexts for the soloists; she and Krötköös take a couple of features, and it's the only criticism of their set that they didn't set it to drop in a due spot. That said, it didn't lack for variety, ringing home huge orchestral masses to soft, baldic numbers like the unexpected closing track where Heino/Länsinen made the most of a sentimental lyric.

There had already been a vocal surprise. Saapohjant Jooni Törmä, one of the stars of European jazz with credits including Coltrane's *Ascension* and Johnny Dyani, put aside his tenor for three strong, half-spoken songs, all the more affecting for an unblownly account – African/Denish/New York – and a delivery as light and paper as Chee Baker. His was a starkly active ring, it looked like, but he was in fine and familiar voice there. The real revelation of the set was drummer Starlaa Paasberg. The young Dame was one of the busier men on the night. Held only just come offstage with Delikum, a fresh, compact and well-rehearsed quartet who mix modern sounds with an old fashioned sonority, largely thanks to Kasper Tuomi's corner. With Tuomi, Paasberg

handled every mirth with calm, everything from a dry cajon rhythm to free-bap and the inevitable Dyrine turn.

The set was joined for a couple of numbers by the other hardest working man in Finnish showbusiness, Saapohjant Mikko Imanen is one quarter of Delimur. He has a hunkily tone that shouldn't sound right with other horns, but worked perfectly alongside Tuomi, especially when he switched to baritone.

The first night had kicked off with a brief duet between guttural Raoul Lehtinen and drummer Lukas Légi. Byriemien is based in New York these days, and the duo's debut CD was recorded at Bill Laswell's place. There's too much emphasis on bassoon, too little on development of ideas, but a slimy set didn't offer much chance of that.

By contrast, the following night stumbled slightly with an overlong performance by Ilmikello Quartet, who seemed to be given licence to run through every wrinkle of their debut March Of The Alpha Males. They come across stronger on record, as does Duo Navaa Finlandia, normally a pairing of veteran Teppo Haukka with pianist Eero Deger, though tonight an intriguing dialogue between the bassist and bass clarinetist Heiko Nikula, two classical players who bring a rare precision to free music, unmarred and limbering.

The star of the second night was unquestionably saapohjant Juhani Aaltonen. With a tenor style that denies much more from Saapohjant

Rolins and Archie Shepp than from Coltrane, he teases out long melodic ideas through and across some daring harmonics. Krötköös and drummer Tuomas Neijhoud round out the trio.

Like the opening night, the finale is another big band, this time trumpeter Ahmed Abdalla's *Disorders*, playing under the headline "Dimensions Of The Spirit Of Ra". Abdalla was an Arkisto member for a brief in the late 80s and early 90s. For all his free form, he has a trumpet sound still reminiscent of Louis Armstrong, clear, bright and expansive, and like Pops he sings as well. Tonight he kites himself largely to Sun Ra charts, jangled on vocals by Monique Nyoni, Miles Griffith and the remarkable figure of post Louis Reyes Rivera. The group is made up of close associates Jenny Weinstock on drums, Masuqaa on guitar and Rudi on bass. The fascinatingly eclectic DD Jackson's are only the third pair of hands to touch the piano all weekend. The horns are tenorist Sami Washington, Robert Rutledge on second trumpet and the irrepressible Frank Lucy on trombone. The music's a typical mix of abstraction and broad Fender Henderson swing. It was a coup to get them there – but it's a shame Abdalla couldn't have come with the same. Etienne Mbappe is up on the TUM crowd, featuring Billy Bang.

It made for a rousing end to a fascinating two days. It was John Törmä who voiced the hope that TUMFest might become a regular fixture. That's something for wrong if it doesn't. Every sound except silence. Bert Bröckl didn't know shit. □



tres pass

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Presented by Arts at St. Ann's and SIRIUS Satellite Radio in association with the South Bank Centre.



The Bays, Barbieri & Torn

Fri 6 May QEH 7.45pm

The Bays are a live music phenomenon and this project is particularly
close to their hearts. They explore their dance music roots with two
musical heroes - David Torn, who David Bowie called 'the Yo-Yo Ma of
electric guitar,' and keyboardist and founder of 80's cult band Japan,
Richard Barbieri, now Grammy-nominated with his project Porcupine Tree.



Tortoise + Konono N°1

Tue 24 May RFH 7.30pm

'Like Jazz scholars wreaking havoc on underground rock'
NME on Tortoise

'When it hits its stride this is the kind of music that gives the
impression of having been flowing since the dawn of civilisation'
Wire on Konono N°1

Chicago based post-rock ensemble Tortoise return to the RFH following
their previous sold out show as part of Lee Scratch Perry's Meltdown,
2003. This is a double-bill with the 12-piece African Ensemble Konono N°1
whose repertoire draws largely on Bazonzo trance music played in front
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Tue 17 May QEH 7.45pm

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8/4 SUNN O))) + JOHN WIESE
9/4 DRAG CITY LABELNIGHT FEAT. JOANNA NEWSOM + ALASDAIR ROBERTS + SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE
10/4 JAGA JAZZIST + SHINING + FRANCO SAINT BE BAKKER + TRIOSK
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Thursday 21st April | Friday 22nd April | Saturday 23rd April

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Subcurrend is part of Scotland's experimental music partnership along with:

Le Weekend (Trance), Inital (The Arches), free radCCAis (CCA), Kill Your Timid Nation (DCA)

Private View

13 May 7.30pm, Jerwood Space, SE1 | Free event

KURT SCHWITTERS - URSONATE PERFORMED BY JAAP BLONK

A limited number of tickets are available from the BBC Ticket Line: 030 8578 1227

Gallery Show

14 May - 3 June, Jerwood Space, SE1 | Free entry
 Including work by: Ashley Bryan, Clegg, Kegel, Levin, Lüdersmann, McLaren, Mythen, Alton S. Schreyer + plus
 artist talks, tours and workshops

Concert 1

22 May 7.30pm, LSO St. Luke's, EC1

ROBERT ASHLEY - THE WOLFMAN

performed by Joel Ryan and Kate Neururer

PETER ABLINGER - IEAOV PART 4 "FÜR JOHANN MICHAEL FISCHER"

MAURICIO KAGEL - ACUSTICA

performed by Apartment House

Tickets: £10.00 Barbican Box Office: 020 7838 8811 (from 8pm - 8pm daily, big tel)

www.barbican.org.uk/booking (including big tel)

Concert 2

29 May 7.30pm, LSO St. Luke's, EC1

YASUNAO TONE - NEW WORK

Raster-Noton artists:

OLAF BENDER (AKA BYETONE)

FRANK BRETSCHNEIDER (AKA KOMET)

CARSTEN NICOLAI (AKA ALVA NOTO)

SIGNAL

Tickets: £10.00 Barbican Box Office: 020 7838 8811 (from 8pm - 8pm daily, big tel)
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Closing Event

3 June 7.30pm, Jerwood Space, SE1 | Free event

JOHN CAGE - WILLIAMS MIX

A limited number of tickets are available from the BBC Ticket Line: 030 8578 1227

Artists Talk 2pm, Jerwood Space, SE1

The Wire presents an Interview with:

YASUNAO TONE

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www.lbc.co.uk/lbcradio

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The Faculty

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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts.

Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK
Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk. Compiled by Phil England



Left: Wolf Eyes make some noise at Subcurrent. Right: Bronx Bark queen ESG gatecrash the Triptych Festival



UK festivals

CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL

CHELTENHAM

Packed six day festival over the May Day bank holiday weekend including a series of one-offs and performances by Dmitri Coileanov and Herbie Hancock. Highlights include Christine Tobin, Markus Stockhausen, Ken Vandermark, Dmitri Coileanov's two bass quartet, Bobby Prevot, Joshua Redman, Herbie Hancock Quartet and more. The film programme includes The Dmitri Coileanov Trio live in 1966 and Steve Lacy - *With The Bandstand*, *On The Road* with Ellery Eskelin, Andrea Parkes and Jim Black, Fred Frith's *Step Across The Border*, and Don Byron: *Walk Don't Walk*. Cheltenham various venues, times & prices, 01242 227979, www.cheltenhamfestivals.org.uk

LOVEBITES

SHEFFIELD

Annual festival of New media and electronic arts. This year's electronic music sound includes a rare UK performance by Spanish artist Francesco López, Thomas Kälter's Ambient meditation on natural decay, and data-gathering sound project, Gullibion, aka Vietnamese artist David Berthold, Wernhard Lackner and Andreas Peiper. Sheffield various venues, 14-16 April, www.lovetypes.org.uk

ONLY CONNECT

London

Annual series of new works and collaborations kicks off with Radhead's Jenny Greenwood's new composition for the BBC Concert Orchestra (23 April), and the Death In Vegas premiere of a new soundtrack to classic surf movie (30). London Barbican, 020 7638 8891, www.bertholm.org.uk

SUBCURRENT

GLASGOW

This annual festival curated by *The Wire's* David Kessler comprises psychadelia, free folk, noise

and improvisation, with Tony Conrad, Wolf Eyes, Double Loops, Fursaxa, Cut Da Sac, Decker Pringa vs Snack Music 7, Es, Kermisstas Yostaf, Kira, Family Underground, Motonogai, Virgin Eye Blood Brothers and Anavus. Saturday afternoon features screenings of films by Tony Conrad and some improvisations by ad hoc combinations of the festival's performers. Supported by *The Wire* Glasgow CDA, 21-23 April, 0141 352 4900, www.cda.org.uk

TRIPTYCH

ABERDEEN, EDINBURGH & GLASGOW

Eclectic festival featuring Alasdair Roberts, Cat Power, ESG, The Fall, Herbie Hancock, Jon Tye, Juan Atkins, Juanita Molina, Kortanez, Octopopone and his moon, MitoWichos-Gross and MitoWichos-Abeschi (in darkness), Laure Andersen, LCD Soundsystem, Maher Shalal Hash Baz, Money Mark, Prince Bustec, Sam Prekop, Savage Pencil, Telephones, Personatones and more. A film programme includes gang warfare feature *Honors* with a live Hip-Hop score, *The Howlin' Wolf Story* and the Marcus Garvey documentary *Look For Me In The Whirlwind*. Aberdeen, Edinburgh & Glasgow, various venues, times & prices, 27 April-1 May, 0870 220 1116, www.trptych05.com

VINCENT GALLI ALL TOMORROW'S PARTIES

UK

The actor, musician and director puts together this month's instalment of the All Tomorrow's Parties festival on England's south coast. Line-up includes Galli himself, PJ Harvey, Jon Spencer Blues Explosion, Suicide, James Chance And The Contortions, Prefuse 73, Buck 65, Lydia Lunch, Jane County, Trapist, The Zombies, The Magic Markers, Gang Gang Dance, John Foxx, Ted Curson, Mt. Rampa, Peaches, Oliva Turner Control, Sean Lennon and more. Camber Sands Holiday Centre, 22-24 April, 020 7734 8932, www.tptfesvt.com

International festivals

DISCO-BABEL

FRANCE

One day event in the French capital featuring Charles Hayward, Gnedelia Tzortzes, David French, Grin, Ixilt, Albert Marcoeur, The Chap plus DJs, merchandise and more. Pans Mains D'Osse, 2 April, www.discobabel.com

DOMINO TEN DAY

BRUGELUM

Annual ten day event featuring an eclectic mix of sounds including Rhythm & Sound with Paul St. Hilaire, Einstürzende Neubauten, Tocot, Joanne Newman, LCD Soundsystem, Sunn O))), Jaga Jazzist, John Wiese, Jenile Usteli, Merade, Six Organs Of Admittance, Alasdair Roberts, Subtle, Beorn Bip, Fog, The Wire Sound System and others. Brussels Andherie Belgique, 6-14 April, www.abcarts.be

FEBIOFEST

CZECH REPUBLIC

Film festival showcasing new music films featuring John Zorn's Masada, Lightning Bolt, Carpet Curtains, John Yea Yeahs, Jon Mitchell, Festival In The Desert and others. Prague Village Cinemas Andel, 31 March-8 April, www.febiofest.cz

IDEAL

FRANCE

French festival spotlighting outsider minimal music and culture from so-called "micro-states". Among others, the two days feature performances by Charlemagne Palestine, Tony Conrad, State Of Sabotage, Mitch & Match, NSK's Peter Mekar (8 April), and Einstürzende Neubauten, The Balanescu Quartet and Yenne KREV performed by Carl Michael von Hausswolff, Wire's Edgard Graham Lewis, John Duncan and Lee Eleggen (9). Nantes Le Loup Unique, 8-9 April, 02 33 2 4012 1434, www.leloupunique.com

ONKYO MARATHON

USA

Two four-hour events put together by composer Carl Staine featuring improvisations from shifting line-ups drawn from: Otomo Yoshihide, Sachiko M, Ichiraku Yoshimatsu, Kenroku Toku, Aske Takamasa, Takamura Nobukazu, o.blast, Stone and Elliott Sharp. New York Japan Society, 1-2 April, 7pm, www.japansociety.org/events

ROADBURN

NETHERLANDS

"Europe's foremost underground festival for somer rock and doom", now in its tenth year. Da Extra Heavy Stage, Electric Wizard, High On Fire, Alabama Thunderpussy and Sunn O))), Da Space Rock Stage, Space Ritual, Brent Bjork And The Bros, Astrofuria and Ultimus. On the Heavy TDS Stage: Hulk, Jesu, Hydras 69 and Vic Du Montri's Idol Plays. VPRO provide live coverage on www.igro.nl. Tilburg 033, 9 April, www.roadburn.com

Special events

BOB COBBING EXHIBITION

UK

A celebration of the recently deceased concrete performance poet put together by Jennifer Pike and Phil Davenport with a soundtrack compiled by David Teas. The event is part of the *Barbary Fest*. Barbary Art Gallery & Museum, to 22 May, www.bartestival.com

MORTON FELDMAN:

THINKING IN SOUND

NETHERLANDS

A weekend of performances devoted to the quiet, subtle giant of the All Time avant-garde by The Eyes Ensemble, The Barlow Workshop and pianist Kees Wiersma. Works include the complete piano works, the five hour *String Quartet 1*, *The King Of Denmark*, *Why Potamus?* and *For Philip Guston*. Utrecht Theater Kikker, 7-10 April, www.theaterkikker.nl

KILL YR IDOLS

UK
Documentary on the New York No Wave and contemporary art-punk scene featuring Lydia Lunch, Arto Lindsay, Glenn Branca, Sora Youth, Yeah Yeah Yeahs, Black Dice and Lungs. 74 minutes featuring archival concert footage and interviews. London ICA Cinema, from 8 April, 020 7930 3847, www.ica.org.uk

KLINKER FILM SUPER 8

FILM WD RKSHP

UK
The eccentric Hugh Metcalfe (see *The Wire* 253) leads the hands-on tutorial in a fast-disappearing medium. London The Sussex, 23-24 April (noon-6pm), final film show 26 (8pm). £45, www.klinkerclub.info

CHRISTINA KUBISCH

UK
Berlin artist maps the hidden sounds of Oxford through electromagnetic technology. Oxford Old Fire Station Theatre, 8 April, 8pm, £8.70-750. 0859, www.oxevents.org

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY

UK
Major retrospective of over 60 works by the New York artist. The surreal and frequently humorous pieces include video and sculpture. London Iberian Art Gallery, 15 May, 11am-6pm, Tues & Thur 11am-8pm, £5/£6, www.berbican.org.uk/gallery. Turntablist Philip Jeck performs on 30 March, 7-8pm, free to ticket holders. www.electro-productions.com

TRESPASS: RESONANCE FM FUNDRAISER

UK
Third anniversary celebration for the art station featuring The Resistance Radio Orchestra, Dexter Bentley, Shrimpy Rivers, and Canal, DJs and more. London Conway Hall, 29 April, 7pm, £3 (under-18s 30p), www.resonancefm.com

TUNNEL OF LOETSCHERG

SWITZERLAND
A collaboration between visual artists and experimental musicians highlighting the

culmination of major construction works – a great tunnel bored through the Alps. Musicians include Otomo Yoshihide, Toshimori Nakamura, Charlotte Haze, Sachiko M, Lionel Marchetti, Voce Croce's Norbert Möslang, Günter Mürler, Keith Rowe and others. Video artist Bill Viola is among the international visual artists. Tunnel of Lütschberg Main Gallery, 28 April, ltschberg.ch

VISUAL MUSIC

USA
Exhibition exploring the relationship of music and visual art commutes until 22 May. Includes key paintings by Wimpy Knderdink, Paul Klee, Georgia O'Keeffe; films and videos by Harry Smith, Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye and John & James Whitney; and installations by Jennifer Starkman, Nils Sawatz and others. Los Angeles The Museum Of Contemporary Art until 22 May. moca.org

VISUAL MUSIC: SEE HEAR NOW:

USA
The series of live music events which accompanies the above exhibition continues with Tim Peacock's elaborate large scale reenactment of David Roseboom's Bell Solari (7-9 April); and a weekend of collaborations between composers and film makers presented by CalArts (14-16 April). Los Angeles REDCAT & MOCA Grand Avenue, moca.org

EXPERIMENTAL

NETHERLANDS
Series focusing on women in electronic music with live performances, video, discussions and workshops. The first instalment features live performances from Hecate and sq as well as a film programme. Rotterdam Aanminus, 20 April, 00 31 86 659947, manetteloverweel.nl

On Stage

AFRIRAMPO

Japanese hardcore girl duo. London Barbers' Boudoir, 21 April, 25, www.upsidetherhythms.co.uk

LAURIE ANDERSON:
THE END OF THE MOON

New solo show reflecting Anderson's time as artist-in-residence for NASA. The performance combines music and narrative in a meditative space travel, war, consumerism and spirituality. Glasgow Tramway Theatre (28 April), Edinburgh Queens Hall (29), Garschadden Saal (1 May), London Barbican (18-21), Manchester Lyric Theatre (24), www.laurieanderson.com

ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS

UK
New York singer promising his new album on Rough Trade. Support from Gorillaz. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 16 April, 7.45pm, £13, 08703 800400, www.trh.org.uk

AUTOTECHRE

Veteran exponent of electronics resurfaces with a new album, *Unwired*, on Warp and play a string of rare live dates. Rob Hat and Mark Brown DJ. London SE1 (14 April), Glasgow Arts School (15), Manchester Zoo (16), Nottingham Stealth (17). www.warprecords.com

KEVIN BIECHLHOFM

This month's *Wire* Women gig features Berlin based ex-Bleachers from Bleachers (leptoper) alongside Pennington Rock, Robbie & Caroline Ross, Compute and Team Up. London The Spitz, 31 March, 7pm, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

BOOM BIP

Basilean producer takes to the road with a full group. Sheffield Bar Above Picture House (1 April), Newcastle Sage (2), Manchester Roachdale (3), Liverpool Academy (4), Glasgow Mono (5), Edinburgh Botle Club (6), Bitter Cavern (13), Bristol Louisiana (14), Outhouse Temple Bar Music Center (15), Cardiff Club Wfor Bach (16), Birmingham Club HQ with Caribou (17), Nottingham Rescue Rooms with Caribou (18), London Scala with Caribou and DJ Kean Heiden (19), Brighton Concorde 2 (24). www.lesrecords.com/boom-bip

CARIBOU

A tour for the group formerly known as Manabata begins with the release of *Sam Smith's* third album, *The Milk Of Human Kindness*. Birmingham Club HQ with Boom Bip (17 April). www.lesrecords.com/boom-bip

Nottingham Rescue Rooms (18), London Scala (19), Edinburgh Bongo Club with Kosuke (21), Glasgow School of Art with Kasule and Surface Empire (22), Aberdeen The Tunnels (23). www.thebellslabel.com

CAT POWER

Three days for distinctive US singer-songwriter Chan Marshall. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (28 April), Glasgow Henry Wood Hall (30), Edinburgh Liquid Room (1 May). www.catpowermusic.com

JAMES CHANCE & THE CONTORTIONS + MAGIK MARKERS + GANG GANG DANCE

Sax-fronted seminal No Wave combo back from the ashes supported by Kentucky Imprev-rock trio and NYC chaos rockers, London Garage, 25 April. www.mefiddler.com

CUL DE SAC

Live performance from five aukers Cul De Sac and Lucy Luke. Byker Cumberland Arms, 26 April, 8pm-midnight, £6, 0191 232 7860

DANGEROUS KITCHEN

Improvised combo featuring sopranoist Stan Salzman with percussion and electronics players Simon Allen and Martin Pyne. London The Warehouse, 2 April, 7.45pm, £8, 020 7928 9251

EINSTÜNZENDE NEUBAUEN

25th anniversary concert for the definitive Berlin Industrial rockers. London Forum, 5 April, 7pm, £16. www.mefiddler.com

ESG

Revised, stripped down post-punk funk from the Puerto Rican Bronxites. London Scala with Superchief, Gbs Jake Fairley, Soul Jazz and Anna (20 April), Glasgow Sub Club with Witch and Wilkes (1 May). www.souljazzrecords.co.uk

FOUR TET + STEVE REID + ICARUS

Veteran free jazz drummer teams up with electronics producer for an improvising duo. Support comes from laptop duo and Soul Jazz Sound System. London The Spitz, 2 April, 020 7392 9032, www.lesrecords.com

GANG GANG DANCE

New York loose rock assembly plus special

Trip Or Squeek *



Out There



Joanna Newsom and Ben Prekop in London

guests. London The Spitz, 26 April, 8pm, www.outtheretherapy.co.uk

GEORGE HASLAM'S FREETIME

UK free jazz saxophonist's *Prague* quartet on a three night run with different guests each night. Guests include bombardist Paul Rutherford, trumpeter Steve Waterman, pianist Richard Lush, bassist Steve Kershaw and drummer Steve Harris. Abingdon Recital Room, 1-3 April, 8pm-late, homerun.aco.uk/saxgigjazz

CHARLES HAYWARD

Ex-The Heat drummer plus avant rock trio Giddy Notes and folk improvisations from multi-instrumentalist duo Mike Adcock and The Wires. Clive Bell, 7 April, London Spitz, www.spitz.co.uk

HIGH ON FIRE

"Equal parts metal and earthquake pants" - New Metal giants take on the UK. Milton Keynes Wroughton Centre (26 March), Exeter Cavern (27), Peterborough Met Lounge (29), Bradford Riles (30), Glasgow Nice 'N' Sleazy (31), Manchester Rko & Gaspe (1 April), Wrexham Corrie Station (2), Liverpool University (3), Nottingham Rock City (4), Birmingham Bar Academy (5), London Garage (6). www.hightonfire.net

ISIS + JESU + EQUILUX

Herculean Beastie outfit supported by Godflesh's Justin Broadrick's new project and Metal Inc Equilux. Birmingham Medicine Factory, 20 April, www.capsule.org.uk

BILLY JENKINS

Inspired ramblings from the jazz-blues guitarist, London The Spitz, 19 April, 7pm, 020 7392 9032, www.spitz.co.uk

LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA

15 (or so) of the best European improvisers. London The Red Rose Club, 3 April, 8pm, 020 7265 7265

MASAAKI KURUMAYAMA SENSEI

Japanese Taiko master drummer appears as a guest of European jazz ensemble, Magenkyo Taiko Drummess. Edinburgh The Queen's Hall (8 April), Glasgow The Tramway (9)

HELMUT LACHENMANN +

IANCU DUMITRESCU

Free BBC invitation concert featuring innovative contemporary composition performed by London Simphonietta. London LSO St Luke's, 13 April, 7:30pm, free tickets from 020 8576 1227 or radio-ticket.lnmtl.co.uk

JOANNA NEWSOM + SIX ORGANS OF ADMITTANCE

96 THE WIRE

Gifed 22 year old singer-songwriter/harpist, opposite the visionary US duo of Ben Chasny and Chris Corsano. Bristol Trinity Arts (1 April), London Queen Elizabeth Hall with Alasdair Roberts and White Magic (2), www.draughts.co.uk

LURGI NONO

London Simphonietta and BBC Singers perform an evening of works by the Italian avant garde composer. London Queen Elizabeth Hall, 27 April, 7:45pm, £21-£5, 08700 606095, www.rh.org.uk

PREFUSE 73

The eclectic HipHop producer with full group plus Serties and Ol'Kraze Helston. London Scala, 7 April, 020 7833 2022, www.letsyouanswers.com

SAM PREKOP

The Sea And Cake leader performs with an all-star avant pop group which includes members of Chicago Underground hip hop and Country. London Bush Hall, 26 April, 7:30pm, 29.50, 020 8222 0144, www.samupstagewears.com

RHYTHM AND SOUND +

EGYPTIAN LOVER +
REPHLEK'S BRAINDEANCE PARTY +
BOGDAN RACZYNSKI

Minimal dub from the Berlin Basic Channel duo, alongside debut UK gig from Los Angeles HipHop fusion outfit and DJing from London's Rephlek massive. London Koko, 1 May, 8pm-£6, 0171 1544040, www.estateuropeans.com

STEREO TOTAL/TEAM JEANS /

CORBA KILLER

Berlin 'Anarchofunk' tour. London 93 Feet East (20 April), Edinburgh The Venue (21), Dublin Whelans (23)

TAURIPS TULA + VIRGIN EYE BLOOD

BROTHERS + HERITA LUSSU ASSA

Free folk touring package featuring drones and loops from David Keenan on guitar and Heather Leigh Murray on vocals and pedal steel guitar supported by US glam post-industrialists and Finnish free folk drone group, Ondar Port Mahon (13 April), Leeds Peacock with Heterogami (14), Bristol Cube Cinema (15), Brighton Martonborough Theatre with Blood Stereo (16), Newcastle Monks Tower (17), London Bartsen's Boulder (18), Shoreditch The Grapes (19) www.vinecino.org

TRIOSK

Australian too milng live jazz and electronica. Bristol The Louisiana (26 April), Edinburgh The Bongo Club (27), Glasgow Sub Club (28). www.triosk.com



Club spaces

BACK IN YOUR TOWN

Monthly improv evening put together by Spring Heel Jacks Ashley Wales and John Cope. Extraordinary vocalist Phil Mintor performs solo plus the house quintet. London Red Rose Club, 21 April, 8:30-11pm, 020 7263 7265

BOAT-TING

Monthly improv night on a boat. This month: a quartet of Tony Marsh, Gary Told, Nigel Coombes and Nick Stephens, Overy, Tomi, Nick Rowan, Miranda Fost and A. Some. K. Kobi; and poetry from Rachel Pantechnicon. London Yacht Club, 4 April, 8pm, 020 8670 5094, www.boat-ting.com

BREAKIN' BREAD

Dirty breaki clubs take this month on live HipHop with Ghost, Keshmire and Verb T plus guest DJs Onura, Timber and guest B-Boy crews Newcastle City Crew and Funk 'n' Disorderly.

London Rhythm Factory, 30 April, 10am-4am, £5-£9, 020 7375 3774, www.bmashinebeat.org

CUBE MICROPLEX

West Country alternative venue has the following music related events: film night focusing on the work of disco innovator and cellist Arthur Russell and the elusive outsider artist, Jandek (4 April); Fog plus special guests (13); synth-folk outfit Taurips Tula, Virgin Eye Blood Brothers and Herita Lusso Assa (15), Cul De Sac with Domo Szaco (30) Bristol Cube, www.cubecinema.com

FREE RADICALS

Improv monthly celebrates its fourth birthday with international improvisers MTK featuring musicians from Norfolk, The Netherlands and New York on turntables, electronic samples, junk and saxophones respectively. They will be joined by Polish bassist Rafal Mazur and play opposite the duo of Nathaniel Catcoph and Eddie Prevost. London Red Rose Club, 6 August, 8pm, £4-£3, 07778 363482

GERERAL

This month's name for The Bohman Brothers' informal improv and experimental weekly. Bring your own drink and be prepared to sit on cushions. This month: Steve Beresford & Pyle Hutchins, Gemma Lash & Nathaniel Catcoph and Sudden Infant (11), *Performance* with Samertha Rebello, Angharad Davies, Hilary Lloyd, Nicolas Christian, Lynn Loos, Mott Davis, Rob Flint, Kevin Mirza, Brad Butler and z'er (16). Mondays (not first Monday of the month), 8pm, £4-£3, 07904 087409

THE GLUEROOMS

Monthly evening of experimental live performance. Oxime 187 teams up with Katcasan for a noisy jam, laptooper Chris Heaver performs with Kay Gaunt, and unpredictable everyday-object players The Bohman Brothers, and DJ Tendow And The Gypsies Dog presents Mobile Phone Orchestra #2 (30 March); Paul Taylor of The Pagans performs his *Nomadic Poetry* (27 April). London Amersham Arms, 8pm-midnight, £3, www.glueroms.com

INTERGRATION

An evening of sonic exploration, electronic music and visual stimulation from Nurse With Wound member Colin Peter, Paul Bradley, The Other Collaborators, Disco Operating System and Illuminati. Preston St Peter Arts Centre, University of Central Lancs, 30 April, 8pm, 01772 465082, www.wentwentyhertz.co.uk/integration

KLINKER DALSTON

Off the wall tour featuring Gregorio Fontana, Luis Montenegro, Martin Baker and Martin Gibbons (1 April); Jacques Fischer and the Adam Bohman / Martin Kupper / Martin Küchen (5); Julia Dayle, Nery Andri, Ruth Marshall and Ann Day plus Paul Hill and Hugh Metcalfe (8); Remo Vivenza (12); George Grizer And Friends (15); London Under Construction (22); Pest & Hugh and Bicycle Clip Sex (26). London The Sussex, Tuesdays and Fridays, 8pm, £5-£2.50, 020 8962 8216, www.klinkerdalton.co.uk

KLINKER NUNHEAD

South of the river department of the Improvised Club MTK featuring Matt Wright turntables, Kai Neuninger, Tom Ialim and Rafał Masurek (7 April); Paul & Hugh Do Consciousness (14); Georg Grizer/Thomas Mählyaher/Peleido on sax/guitar/laptop (21); John Edwards and Kay Grant on double bass and electronic vocals (28). London The Ky House, Thursdays, 8pm, £2-50, 020 506 02222 0222, www.klinkernunhead.co.uk

ONGAKU: ENJOY_SOUND

Improv meeting featuring the noise 91, a film by Edith Pasquier and an illustrated lecture on Philadelphia jazz from Tom Pechard. London The Horse Hospital, 10 April, 8pm, £5-£3, www.ongakusound.com

OXFORD IMPROVISERS

Oxford Improvisers Orchestra (Oxford Ovala Xchange Gellings, 14 April, 8pm, £5-£3); Pete McPhail/Dominic Lash/Malcolm

Adkiss/Chris Hills (Modern Art Dord, 21 April, 5.45pm, £3/£2) www.oxfordimprovisers.com

RAY'S JAZZ AT FOYLES

Monthly session of free improvised music concerts continues with US fingerpicking guitarist Duck Baker and his reinventions of folk themes. Ray's Jazz at Foyle's, 28 April, 6pm, free, www.foyles.co.uk

RE-MOTE CLUB

New East London live music monthly focusing on experimental noise, psychadelia and electronics. This month: Aurora Moore of Volcano The Bear's new project Dragon Or Emperor, psych rock from Guapo and Leeds drone trio Birds Of Delir. London Barbers' Boudoir, 15 April, 8pm-3am, £5, www.re-moteclub.co.uk

THE SPRAYL

Self-styled sonic buffet of electronica. Live performances by Düsseldorf musician Antonello Ercoli and We're Breaking Up Too. Two thousand-strong label boss Michael Rother performs on analogue electronics. Guest DJs are Marc Krueger from Cologne label haric and Kosmische Di Tanga, Mango, London. Chancery Bar, 13 April, 7.30-11.30pm, £4/£3, 020 7606 0858, www.sprayl.org.uk

Incoming

THE BAYS + RICHARD BARBIERI + DAVID TORN

UK
Improvising quartet supported by former Japan keyboardist on a Contemporary Music Network tour. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (6 May), Manchester Zoo Arts Centre (7), Brighton Dome (8), Norwich Playhouse (9), Oxford Zodiak (10), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (11). www.cmmus.org.uk

ORNETTE COLEMAN

UK
75th birthday concert with quartet and guests. London Barbican, 2 May, 7.30pm, £15-£30, 0845 120 7550, www.barbican.org.uk/contemporary

UK Radio

RESONANCE 104.4 FM

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ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC

Thursdays 9-10pm. Presented by The Wire staff

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Alternates Saturdays 8pm. With Richard Thomas

BERMUDA TRIANGLE

Thursdays mid-night. Presented by These Records

CLEAR SPOT

Wednesdays 7pm. Open access slot

NOSTALGIE YA MBOKA

Saturdays 1-3pm

CROSS RADIO

Sundays 11.30pm. John Duncan's radio art show

DIGGERS

Tuesdays 5pm. With Savage Pencil and Sharpe Gel

FIFTY-FIFTY SOUND SYSTEM

Tuesdays 11.30pm. Old Skool dub & reggae

CUT AND SPICE

UK

Festival of electroacoustic music and expanded composition put together by Sonic Arts Network and supported by The Wire. Concerts include Jazzy Stock performing Kurt Schwitters's *Ursonate*, Robert Aspin's *The Wolfman*, Mauricio Kagel's *Audacia*, works by Iasueno Torre, Cervet Nicoli, Frank Bressnacher and Olaf Bender and a re-creation of John Cage's *Williams Mix*. An accompanying exhibition at the Jewell Gallery displays original prints of Schwitters's score, works by Fluxus, Cage scores, *The Source* magazine and Raster-Noton works (14-May-3 June). London St Lukes and Jewell Gallery, various times & prices, www.sonicartsnetwork.org, www.bbc.co.uk/mediagallery

DISSONANZE

ITALY

Fifth edition of this annual Italian electronic festival supported by The Wire. This year's artists include Raul Villalobos, Richter Howlin, Granular Synthesis, James Holden, Jamie Uiedel, Matmos, Alter Ego, Nathan Faxon, Ryoli Ikeda, Speedy Li Dimbach, Thomas Kälter, Magda, Unstack, Wang Xian, Koaxat, Edat, Giancarlo and more. Rome Palazzo Del Congresso, 19-21 May, www.dissonanze.it

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL MUSIQUE ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE

CANADA

This year's line-up includes Bill Mori/Zenna Perkins, Anthony Braxton/Fred Frith, Wolf Eyes, Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet, The Borelcons, Christine Hudecka, The Nels Cline Singers, Kid Koala/Marc Turteltaub, Plastic People Of The Universe with the Agora Orchestra, Philip Jodl/Jeremy Scheerf, Taurian Moore's Dream Alter Unit and many others. Victoriaville various venues, times & prices, 19-23 May, www.fimav.ca

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Annual free improv festival celebrating

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MINING FOR GOLD

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ONKYODO

Alternate Tuesdays 8.30pm. Japanese music with The Wives Bibi Kopf, Alex Cummings and Olaf Bell

OST

Saturdays 4.30pm. Soundtracks with Johnny Trunk

OUT TO LUNCH

Wednesdays 2pm. With Ben Watson

OVER THE EDGE

Saturdays 9am. With Nigella Land

ROUGH TRADE SHOP

Thursdays noon. With Simon Russell

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Alternate Mondays 8.30pm. With Meow Baines

SOLID STEEL

Mondays 1am. With Colicat

SOUND POETS EXPOSED

Sundays 6.15pm. With Olaf Graaham

Homegrown talent featuring Steve Beresford/Joe Wilkinson/Roger Turner, Lal Cachill & Neil Metcalfe, Sylvie Hallet/Caroline Kraske/Weyan Weston, Ewan Parker/John Edwards/Mario Matos/Matt Metcalfe/John Ringeroff/John Russell, Paul Rutherford/John Edwards/Mark Sanders and others to be confirmed. London Red Rose Club, 1 May, 3.30pm, £20/£23/£26, www.kernavenuedisco.com

HERBIE HANCOCK

UK

The pioneering keyboardist with his acoustic quartet featuring Gary Thomas, Scott Colley and Temi Lynn Carrington (17 May), with special guests from past and future studio projects (28); and with The London Symphony Orchestra featuring music from the album *Gereshen's World* (29). London Barbican, 7.30pm, £15-£30, 0845 120 7550, www.barbican.org.uk

LE WEEKENDER 05

STIRLING

The Wires continue to sponsor this event, now in its eighth year, with a programme co-curated by David Keenan. UK 05 promises to be as gritty and challenging as ever, ranging from free jazz to electronic improvisation. Four evenings feature Paul Flaherty/Chris Corsino Duo, Hilly Shepp/The Kausikaya (26); The Dream Aldean Unit, Murray Druck, David Foulk & The Del (27); The Flirts, Alan Hemmings (tbc), Rude Prow (28) and Otomo Yoshihide's New Septet, Mochizuki Hanzaku and Sushiko No Fusa (29). The daytime programme features talks and workshops. String Telephone, 26-29 May, day ticket £12/£8, two-day festival pass £22/£14, full festival river ticket £40/£26, 01786 274000, www.leweekenderfestival.com

MUSIC LOVERS' FIELD COMPANION

UK

With-sponsored three day festival featuring international acts ranging from free folk to early works by composers of the avant-garde. A four hour Improv session set by Japanese guitarist Keiji Haino entitled Secret Of Music (20 May); Vibramachined Orchestra, My Cat Is An Aher, www.leweekenderfestival.com

Takashi Kusagi's Catch-Wave 05, Luc Ferrari's *Zastologos* 3 performed by Kimerign, Haino and others (21); and Jardeek, Nimpinge, Shabu Ishiba, Kyoko No Interbon (22). Gotehouse The Sage, 20-22 May, www.thesagegateshead.org

TORTOISE + KONOANO NO 1

UK

Cheeky post-rockers Tortoise supported by Georgeous amplified thumb-piano train masters. London Royal Festival Hall, 24 May, £20-£17.50, 0870 8004600, www.rfh.org.uk

ULRICHSSBERGER KALEIDOPHON

AUSTRIA

Improv annual featuring Harry Gomes/Marylin Crapoi/Andrew Cyrille, Radnor, Garry Markey Quartet, Phillips Wachsmann/Michael Janzen/Paul Linton, Paul Rutherford's Rollie, Plastic Quartet, Günter Christmann's Met D'Archive, Fieldwork, Daniel Stürler's Janus, Alexander Von Schlippenbach solo, Atelier Abastia & prostoN. Ueberberg Jazztage, 5-7 May, 04 43 7288 6301, www.jazztage.it

UNICCOL 2005

SWITZERLAND

The Sun Ra Arkestra perform twice, alongside Egberto Gismonti, Steimbarb Switzerland, Frédéric Le Juster, Ket 2 Festau Quartet, Sibukshevashvili and others. The concerts are open air and warm waterproof clothes and Alpine shoes are recommended. Poschiavo, 5-8 May www.uniccol.ch

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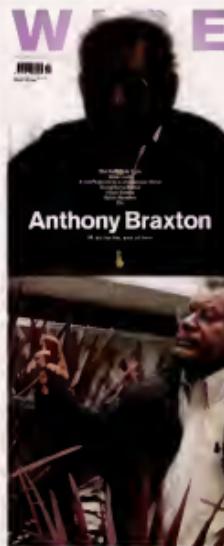
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Epiphanies

Electrelane guitarist **Mia Clarke** is fired up by the tumbling, eclectic energy of Dutch anarcho-improvisors **The Ex**

The Ex, with Ethiopian saxophonist Getatchew Mekurya



I first met The Ex in Hollywood, California. It was late September 2004 and the Dutch quartet were completing the last leg of a US tour with Henk Bennink, working their way up the coast from Los Angeles to Seattle. My group Electrelane had been invited as the support on the eight-show run. Although we all caught up with The Ex rather late into their 25 years of activity – my first recollection was their 1999 collaboration with Tortoise for Konkurrent's *In The Saltank* series – we were looking forward to seeing them live, and this joint tour provided the opportunity to experience their energetic punk rock at close quarters.

In a city such as Hollywood, where backstabbing and big bucks are the cause and effect of everyday life, The Ex's powerfully delivered, lyrically political set at the Troubadour on Santa Monica Boulevard provided a striking juxtaposition to the world of hostile one-upmanship and shabby bombast existing outside. Like all their fans, I admire the diligence with which The Ex have maintained their values since they formed in August 1979: relentless recording and touring; self-distribution and release of records (complete with posters, booklets and other relevant reading); their uncompromising ethics and advocacy of community – within the alternative music circuit, politically, and through the squat movement in which the members have been active throughout the years. You learn by example, so to experience The Ex's commitment and straightforwardness on a day-to-day basis during that tour was inspiring and exciting for us. Despite hefty generational and musical differences between our groups, a feeling of mutual respect and unity struck up, and Electrelane were invited to celebrate The Ex's 25th anniversary in Amsterdam that coming November – a great honour and great fun.

The Ex's celebration, referred to as *Een Plezante Aangelegenheden* (A Pleasant Affair), was held at Amsterdam's main venue, the Paradiso. The spacious rooms and high ceilings of this old, converted church

provided a perfect location for the weekend long party that ran not inside. Just as The Ex's music has evolved from the straight-up anarcho-punk of '79 to the divergent patterns of sound on 2004's *Jurn*, the array of musicians that the group selected to perform at their anniversary mirrored their range of reference: Gold Blade's raw Manouche punk; Tamout's Moroccan Gnawa rhythms; John Butcher's saxophone improvisations. While drinking nettle tea in guitarist Terrie's house on the morning of the show, sitting next to a blind 80 year old drummer from Ethiopia, the Ex's decision to encourage such an assortment of musical styles struck me as ambitious, but in keeping with their good natured way of challenging conformity by throwing everything into the melting pot.

Inside the Paradiso, everyone was in high spirits. The evening began with a crowd gathered around Silent Block's maze of pasting tables, onto which an assortment of household appliances and self-made instruments had been rigged up like an enormous mousetrap. Sounds were tweaked and pulled, hammered and strung out as though made of malleable substances, the trio's improvisations interlocking with intuitive precision. No strangers to collaboration and improvisation themselves, The Ex encouraged group members to mingle for one-off live sets. Ethiopian saxophonist Getatchew Mekurya interrupted ICP's glorious sonic trickery halfway through, sauntering onto the stage in beautiful rainbow robes while taunting deep hollers and harsh brays from a shmy tenor. In the next room, film maker Jim Cohen projected some recently filmed 16mm footage of freeways and airports onto a screen as Ex guitarist Andy Moor and electronic composer Yannis Kyriakides provided a spontaneous soundtrack of bubbling feedback and hissing guitar strings.

Experiencing the force of Neptune's show was a highlight of the night, like Silent Block, the Boston group, fronted by metal sculptor Jason Sanford,

contort the relationship between man and machine by fashioning instruments out of scrapyard junk. Two fretless guitars, each weighing in at 30 pounds, were made out of the top of a 55 gallon oil drum and a disassembled VCR. The drum kit was an incredible piece of work: circular saw blades soldered to blade wheels and sections of ventilation duct that were viciously pummelled in a configuration of unusual tempos. The sight of people spinning and ginning as the group's sweat and sticks came flying through the air was an absolute treat.

The Ex organised the event so that there was always a consistent flow of music, dance or spoken word being performed in at least two different rooms at any given time. Non-stop interactive entertainment came from Wilf Plumb of The Dog Faced Hermans and ex-NoMeansNo guitarist Andy Kerr, who displayed an admirable amount of stamina as The Living Ex Jukebox by playing any requested Ex song for 50 cents a pop.

As I wandered into the main hall and leaned over the balcony to watch Terrie and Andy's distinctive Improv banter, playfully interspersed by Paul Lovens and Tony Buck on drums, the personal importance of the evening abruptly hit a keynoter. All the great things that The Ex have stood for over the last 25 years were tumbling together and coagulating in a fury of zine swapping, new ideas, record exchanges, collaborations and adventurous music. It was a feeling of intense joy that reminded me of the Fugazi and Lydia Lunch shows I sneaked out of the house to attend during my mid-teens – the kind of enthusiasm, support and dedication to independent music that encouraged me to pick up a guitar in the first place. I expect that many other people in the audience were feeling the same way as they listened to Terrie's stringingly sweet notes shoot through the body of the building with jumpy velocity, like dice rolling across tarmac. □ Electrelane's new album *Axes* is out next month

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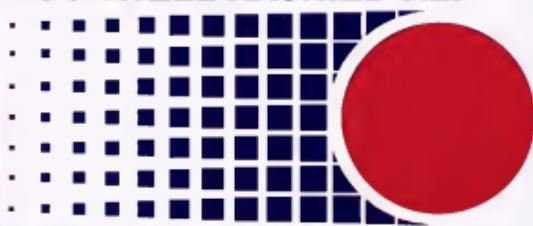
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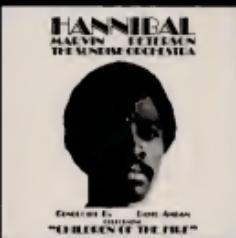
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